

# LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1875.

## ABOVE SUSPICION.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

### CHAPTER XIX.

#### UNCLE AND NIECE.

'I am afraid it is impossible to make terms with the fellow without buying him,' said Mr. Irwin, in answer to his niece's entreaty; 'and there is nothing of which I have such a dread as putting myself into the power of any human being.'

'But if you are in his power already, uncle?' she suggested.

'I should be putting myself more in his power if I began paying him for silence.'

'In what way?'

'Why, his demands would go on increasing till the burden became unendurable—besides, there may be fifty other people who recollect me perfectly.'

'I thought you said he would not have recognised you, had it not been for the unfortunate meeting with—my mother.'

'He had some remembrance of me before that. Oh, Bella! what would I not give to be able to begin my life over again with my present experience! I think the happiest man on earth must be he who, having no past he is afraid to remember, can walk in the present, and on to face the future without dread.'

She did not answer. She was thinking how frequently the same

idea had occurred to her: how enviable, spite of its cares, its shifts, its debts and its humiliations, Mr. Wright's lot had often seemed when contrasted with her own.

A life which held nothing in it to be concealed was her notion of an existence to be envied.

We have each and all our ideal of perfect happiness. Mr. Wright's was to have always five pounds in his pocket, and no duns at his gates. Miss Miles', to be able to speak freely without fear, and to feel she could answer any question concerning her parents and her childhood without falsehood.

To some of the old Barthornes—to some of the loyal gentlemen, and fair, faithful daughters of Abbotsleigh—this girl had gone back for the qualities which made her shrink when she was forced to back up the fiction of her orphan condition with one untruth after another.

There had been a time when she thought her uncle would have done wisely to tell the Rev. Mr. Wright and Selina his wife the story of her life as it really was; but she thought so no longer. Life at Fisherton, which had taught her much, had proved to

her that there are some things concerning which silence is wisdom—silence is a necessity. Even as a servant, she now understood the terrible past would, if revealed, have power to destroy every blossom of happiness existence held.

She had no choice except to be careful and secret; but every vein in her heart loathed the deception she was forced to practise. Never till the end came, when deception was no longer needful, did her lips utter glibly the falsehoods her position compelled them to frame. Neither did she seek to justify her own lack of verity by dwelling on the shortcomings of others.

Not a day passed at Fisherton without some polite fiction being uttered by gracious, plausible Mrs. Wright—who was wont to say there was only one sin she humanly considered unpardonable, and that was lying; whilst as for poor Mr. Wright, the fibs he told, the ‘false glosses’ he put on, the mendacious statements he backed almost with tears—would have been absurd, had they not been pitiable also.

And yet, in this atmosphere, Bella kept her faith intact in all things good, true, and lovely. Perhaps, by reason of her own fault she dared not judge the fault of others. This virtue is not a common one. It is so much easier to see the mote than to feel the beam, that we may well excuse poor Mrs. Wright for frequently expressing her sorrow at finding people ‘so false.’

Never once in Fisherton church, when Mr. Wright was declaring the weightier matters of the law, did this girl—in whom I hope some of my readers feel an interest—mentally thrust his words back to his condemnation. Nay, rather, when she fell on her knees and shut out the congregation, and thought of all the sermon had

taught her, her cry to God was, ‘Have mercy on me, a sinner,’ rather than ‘I thank Thee that I am not as these.’

‘Uncle,’ she began at last, ‘do you remember promising long ago that you would some day tell me about the work you used to do at West Green?’

‘I hoped you had forgotten all that,’ he said.

‘I never forget: I wish—I wish I could,’ she answered. ‘I should be so happy if it were possible to fancy those times only a bad dream.’

‘We will not recall them,’ he replied.

‘But there are some things I want to understand,’ she persisted. ‘I lie awake at night, and try to patch and put together all I can recollect of what happened when I was a child. I have often had the question on my lips before, but did not like to put it; now, however, that we have got upon the subject, I must ask you just one thing, uncle: what was the work, so still and quiet, that kept you up hours after all our neighbours were in bed?’

‘It was coining,’ he said doggedly. ‘Don’t look so frightened—we did not send out bad money, but good; and had your father contented himself with doing what he told me he intended to do—buy old silver and gold cheap—I don’t know that much harm could have come of the matter; but he did not content himself with that, as you are aware. Your mother’s folly and his own obstinacy ruined him.’

‘Often and often I told him what the end of it must be; but he always laughed at my cautions, and said he would give any one leave to find him out who could. I do not see, however, that any good purpose can be served by our discussing that terrible past. Ever

since the night you and I walked together into London, I have tried, God knows, to lead an honest life. I have striven to make atonement where atonement was possible. Every penny of the money which fell to my share, and that was in my possession when the crash came, I have divided amongst those I had any reason to suppose suffered through our malpractices. First or last, I have never used any of your father's share in order to pay for your education; and latterly I have not touched it even to provide for your mother. As for your father, Bella, he has paid a heavy penalty for his sins, and I think we may let them rest. What I hope, and trust, and pray, now is that he may not return to England—that neither of us may ever set eyes on him again. The best news I could hear would be that he was dead, and the story of his crime and its punishment buried with him.'

She was crying, silently and secretly, but in the moonlight he could see the tears streaming down her cheeks.

'Come, dear,' he said, 'let us turn back and have no more melancholy talk. You are not responsible for his faults, and we must prevent his sins being ever visited on you. The day may come when you will have to decide for yourself, whether you will cast in your lot with either of your parents—which would be certain destruction to your happiness—or whether you will strike out in life independent of both. It is possible, now Mr. Irwin is dead, that I may eventually be able to adopt you as my own daughter, and take you to my own home. That is what I should like to do; but for the present you must remain here. You are happy at the rectory, I hope and believe.'

'Quite—oh, yes!—quite,' she

said, her voice a little unsteady and broken with tears.

'And you are learning the usages of society, and all that sort of thing, which may be useful to you hereafter.'

'Yes—I think so.'

'As for your mother, Bella,' he went on, 'she is just what she always was. She was a foolish young woman, and she is now a foolish middle-aged woman. Her latest idea is to go out to Australia and join your father. She says she is certain he would not refuse to be reconciled after all these years. But I think her real reason for undertaking the journey is that she believes he is married to some one else. She was always jealous when she had him under her eye, and she is naturally more jealous now he is beyond her supervision. She did not say much about you. She asked if she could see you, and offered to go to France for the purpose; but when I reminded her of the promise your father exacted from me that I should not permit any communication, she seemed quite satisfied. At the same time, it would not surprise me if she went to every school in and about Paris to try and find you.'

'But, uncle, you are surely not going to let her sail for Australia!' exclaimed the girl.

'My dear Bella, how can I prevent her going to Australia, or any other place she takes a fancy to visit? She has money from me, of course, and she can spend it in paying rent or paying for her passage, just as she pleases. The only thing I could do would be to say: "As you are determined to have your own way, I will make that way as unpleasant to you as possible;" and this is precisely what I should not care to do. For a few pounds more she can travel comfortably instead of uncomfortably; and as it is not in the least degree

likely she will find her husband when she gets to Australia, why, no harm will be done, and she will be out of my way for some time, at all events.'

'Why should she not find him?' asked his niece.

'Because Australia is a big country, and she does not happen to know where he is in it. You may be very sure I did not give her the address to which he told me to write. She has an idea that Australia is something like New York, where, if you remember, she followed me, and found me.'

'But if they do meet, something dreadful will happen,' said the girl. 'He will never forgive her—I feel quite certain of that.'

'And if I were in his place, I do not think I could forgive her either. Knowing what she must have known——' He stopped abruptly.

'Go on, please,' entreated his niece. 'What was it she did know? Was it what I have so often fancied—what I have been afraid even to think about?'

'Why, she knew, of course—she must have known—that most of the things which came into the house were stolen,' said Mr. Irwin, a little confusedly.

'And what else?' persisted his companion.

'What else should there be? Was not that enough?'

'It is a long time ago,' she said; 'and, what with the voyage to America and the fever I had, I often get confused when trying to recall things that happened when I was young. But there comes back to me occasionally a terrible notion—I cannot remember when it first took firm hold of me—that I heard people talk about a dreadful murder; and with the murder I associate the dagger we dropped that night we walked across the quiet fields I have never seen since, and then through the Lon-

don streets. Am I right? Was not some man killed at Highgate?'

He did not immediately answer—when he did, it was in a constrained tone.

'Yes—I think there was a man found dead about that time.'

'Was it ever known who killed him?'

'Never, I believe.'

'Uncle, do you know?'

'I do not,' he answered.

'Do you suspect? Was it my father? Did we drop the clue in that silent street off the Liverpool Road?'

Then ensued a dead silence. For the first time Walter Chappell felt a sickening desire to defend his brother-in-law's character—for the first time he searched about for excuses—for the first time he felt inclined to act as his advocate.

'Uncle, you do not speak,' she said at last softly.

'My dear,' he answered, 'you press me hard and sore. I cannot tell you a lie; and yet, if I must speak, I am only able to say—what must pierce you to the heart. I believe that night you saved your father's life. I think, had that dagger been found in his house he would not have been transported—he would have died in front of Newgate. But, Bella, remember this: he did not do the deed, if it was done by him, in cold blood. I never mentioned the subject to him—I never will, except in case of the direst necessity. But my reading of the matter is this: He had constant access to the house. For days, as I take it—perhaps for weeks—he had been removing gold and silver plate and ornaments from the strong room. On the morning when McCallum died he had probably just removed some valuable articles, and being met with the spoil, in a moment of desperation he killed the man who had the misfortune to encounter



him. I have thought the matter over and over, and can come to no other conclusion than that he did kill McCallum, in order to escape the precise doom which afterwards overtook him. He was in too great a hurry to be rich, Bella. I trace every ill which has befallen him to one master passion—ambition.’

And then, taking the girl’s cold hand in his, he told her the story of her father’s birth, education, expectations, disappointment.

With more tenderness than he had ever thought to employ when speaking of a man he feared and almost hated, he who had turned from the error of his ways recited the wrongs of this Ishmael who considered himself to have been so harshly treated.

He spoke of him as, had circumstances happened otherwise, he might have been—a wealthy country squire, clever, well informed, highly considered; and then he presented her with the reverse of the picture. He showed her the youth, brought up to consider himself the heir, cast out from his father’s house, working as a common smith—with all the blood in his veins turning to gall—with all his boyish hopes dispelled—with all the idols he had worshipped shattered.

And so he talked on till he was almost too late for his train; and she, after running a few yards on her way to the Rectory, slackened her pace to weep almost frantically, for pity, over the father she trusted she might never see more—for sorrow that she herself had not died when she lay sick of that terrible fever in New York.

## CHAPTER XX.

### ROSIE’S DÉBUT.

IF Mr. Wright had gone to bed on Christmas Eve with even a vague fear as to the solvency of Mr. Irwin,

junior, and any doubt concerning the profitable ‘cutting up’ of old Mr. Irwin’s estates, his direst forebodings must on Christmas morning have been entirely dissipated.

Beside the hot water lay two packets, small, sealed, suggestive—one directed to Mrs. Wright, the other to the Rev. D. Wright, both in Bella Miles’ handwriting.

The first contained a plain but handsome bracelet, with Mr. Irwin’s kind regards and best wishes; the second a ring, with Bella Miles’ earnest hope that the Rev. Dion might spend a happy Christmas, and enjoy many happy New Years.

‘Really most graceful,’ said the Rector, turning the ring over and over, referring, it is scarcely necessary to say, to the thoughtfulness of the donor.

‘I am sure I never expected Mr. Irwin to think of me,’ remarked Mrs. Wright, sitting up in bed, and clasping the bracelet round her arm, which, though fair and soft, had lost much of the shapely plumpness of youth. ‘I call this a very handsome gift indeed.’

‘That it is,’ agreed the Rector heartily; ‘and the very thing you were in want of. You have needed a decent bracelet badly enough this many a year past, Selina.’

Which was indeed quite true, jewelry happening not to be one of the sins of extravagance that Mrs. Wright affected.

At the first stir of wakened life in their parents’ apartment came the children, eager to display their gifts, with which they were laden—gifts from aunts in Ireland, who had stinted themselves to send toys and presents of all sorts to boys and girls already overstocked with books, and boxes, and dolls, and trumpets, and so forth.

Some indiscreet friend had forwarded Curran a drum, in which Roderick, with a wise foresight, had already punctured a few holes to

facilitate the speedy demise of its powers of giving annoyance; and Rosie was making morning hideous by producing appalling sounds from the interior of a barking dog.

But Miss Miles' presents exceeded those of all other donors in value and appropriateness.

Roderick, it is true, was slow to show the wonders of his dressing-case, because amongst them were a pair of razors; but the other sons and daughters of the house of Wright eagerly displayed writing-desks, and silver pencils, and small brooches, and necklaces, and knives, and boxes full of *bonbons*, which Bella had purchased.

'Now, now, now!' exclaimed Mr. Wright at last. If he was a fond parent, he was also a fidgety man, and liked to have ample leisure for making his toilet, eating his breakfast, looking out his sermon, and walking at a moderate pace to church. 'Take these things away, and be off every one of you. Do you think I can brush my hair with all you young plagues swarming about me?'

'Yes, run away, dears,' echoed the plagues' mamma. 'Curran, I hope you gave Bella a pretty kiss for her kindness to you?'

'We have all kissed her, ma,' said Miss Maria, who was judging of the effect of the new bracelet on her own wrist.

'I didn't,' contradicted Roderick, who perhaps felt he was too far advanced in years for such exercises to be considered becoming; 'but I told her she was a jolly girl, and that I was awfully obliged to her.'

'Roderick,' remonstrated Mr. Wright, 'where do you learn that incomprehensible style of language? Not from your mother or me, of that I am quite sure.'

Now, if Mr. Wright had left out that statement, his utterance might have inspired his son with rever-

ence. As matters were, the idea of either of his parents indulging in slang tickled Roderick's fancy to such a degree that he could only splutter out, 'I don't suppose, sir, my language would be proper uttered in the pulpit; but it is quite comprehensible. All fellows understand "jolly" and "awfully." I am sure you yourself know clearly what I mean.'

'A new generation is about to reign,' remarked Mr. Wright resignedly, 'and you, I suppose, are one of the intended rulers.'

He would have quoted Shakespeare at that moment anent young folks pushing elders from their stools; but he could not remember the text quite accurately; and, moreover, he was tying his white cravat, an operation which with him was one of exceeding care and nicety. Breakfast on Sunday morning at Fisherton Rectory was quite an imposing ceremony, and it is needless to say that on Christmas mornings all the resources of the establishment were brought into play.

Mr. Wright himself, in a snowy shirt and unexceptionable broadcloth, was indeed a spectacle to rejoice the heart of all good Protestants; and then there was Mrs. Wright, arrayed in her best bib and tucker; and the children, the eldest dressed out in their choicest apparel, the youngest soaped and towelled up to a state of the highest perfection, with well-oiled sleek heads, with wonderful chubby mottled-looking arms, with pinafores which rivalled the whiteness of their male parent's shirt, with little rosettes of bright-coloured ribbon tying up their sleeves, and a fillet of the same confining their hair.

It was not in Mr. Wright's human nature to refrain from casting a triumphant look at Colonel Le-schelles when the troop ranged

themselves round the table, and folded their hands preparatory to the grace, which their father, having a dislike to lukewarm tea, made commendably short.

As for Mrs. Wright, she held a fixed opinion that every one must be miserable, if not clearly wicked, who had not several children, and she made no secret even to the Colonel himself that she believed he was wretched because no fruitful vine and no young olive branches graced his solitary board.

On occasions such as the present she was, therefore, wont to look at her children with a fond smile, which she suffered to fade away into sadness as her eyes rested on the unhappy bachelor.

This little pantomime amused the Colonel immensely; and it was perhaps because she was the only one of the party likely to sympathise with his enjoyment of the position that his glance involuntarily sought out Bella Miles, in whose face he saw something of mirth lurking.

Spite of her trouble—spite of the fact that she had cried herself to sleep overnight, and that her head was still aching, by reason of the conversation with her uncle on the previous evening, Bella could not help being diverted with both parents and children.

The latter were so satisfied with themselves, and the former were so satisfied with themselves and the children too, that the sight of the family trooping downstairs, followed by the admiring looks and approving words of the Rev. Dion and Mrs. Wright, was enough to have tried the gravity of any disinterested spectator.

'Ah!' said Nurse Mary, in a discreet 'aside' to Miss Miles, 'they say stock is as good as money; but if I was in master's shoes, I think I could do with less of it than he has in hand.'

On that particular Christmas

Day Rosie was to make her *début* in church, and on the strength of this circumstance Bella Miles had presented the child with a Prayer-book almost as big, and quite as bright and new-looking, as herself.

Already, with the assistance of Roderick, Rosie and Curran had looked up several services of the Church, publicly baptized her latest doll, married her to a man who was suspended on wires, and turned summersaults in a way calculated to make the beholder dizzy; and finally, having stretched her in an eau-de-Cologne case, buried her under the blankets of her cot. These rites and ceremonies satisfactorily performed, Curran and Rosie had a stand-up fight as to who should carry the Prayer-book to church; and Nurse Mary finally conveyed the coveted article to Miss Miles' room, assuring her it had 'stood a near chance of being torn to bits among them quarrelsome young divils. God forgive me for speaking such a word—though He knows I am not calling them out of their right names.'

To describe the house when the young people were preparing and being prepared to go to church, it would, to quote Nurse Mary's lucid remark, 'take the pen of a Job.'

Maria had split her new gloves, and Roderick could not find the hat-brush, upon which Curran had seated himself in a sulk because his mamma would not let him have a mince-pie before starting. One child was crying and another laughing. Colonel Leschelles was walking up and down the drawing-room, uttering a special thanksgiving all by himself. Mr. Wright, umbrella shouldered, chest well out like a pouter-pigeon, sermon-case in his pocket, and peace and charity even towards his creditors in his heart—had wisely left the scene of action a quarter of an hour previously, and was walking with the gait and air of a bishop se-

dately to church. Mrs. Wright had housemaid and cook, and a young woman from a former parish who was in delicate health, all looking through her drawers for unfindable articles of apparel. She did not do much herself, except stand before the glass arranging her curls, varying the proceedings by running to the door at intervals and exclaiming:

'Now, Bella, dear—now Nurse Mary, you good soul—are those children nearly ready? You know their papa cannot bear their going into church late. And, Bella, will you lend me a pair of your cuffs? and if you have a spare fall—don't take yours off—any old thing will do for me. What a girl it is! I believe, as Mr. Wright says, you would take the gown off your back if you thought any one else wanted it.'

At last, something like order being produced out of chaos, the children trooped downstairs and broke out into the drive. Looking, though faded, pretty and ladylike, Mrs. Wright passed into the drawing-room, and, seeing Colonel Leschelles there, said:

'I am so sorry to have kept you waiting—but there are such a number of us to get ready. No, don't walk with me, please; I must see to the little ones—and children bore you, I know. I am sure they would me, if they were not my own. Bella—Bella, love—Colonel Leschelles will take care of you. Rosie, darling, come and mamma will hold your hand—there's a dear.'

'No,' retorted the dear, clinging to Bella, who carried the gorgeous Prayer-book.

'I'm going to walk with mamma,' said Curran, with a mental eye to future mince-pie and plum-pudding.

'Me too,' instantly shouted the latest arrow in the rectorial quiver, rushing off with infantile perversity

to secure her mother's disengaged hand; and thus, youngest son on one side, youngest daughter on the other, with seven other pledges of affection in front, and Colonel Leschelles and Bella in rear, Mrs. Wright walked through Fisherton, to the admiration of all beholders.

'I think, Miss Miles,' said Colonel Leschelles to his companion, 'that I have had the pleasure of seeing you somewhere before. Your face seems quite familiar to me.'

Bella shook her head.

'You must be mistaken,' she answered, looking up at him with clear, honest, and yet timid eyes as she spoke. 'I should have remembered you had I ever seen you since I was quite a little child. I never did forget any one, I think, unless it might be the strangers who were about me when I had fever in New York,' she added, as if imagining he had possibly been one of them.

'I did not know you had been in New York,' he remarked. 'Are you American by birth, then?'

'Oh, no!' she replied, and a swift, hot flush came up into her face as she said so. 'I went there when I was quite young, with my uncle; but the climate did not suit my health, and so he sent me to a school near Paris, where I stayed till I came here.'

'Then of course we have never met before,' he said; 'and yet I have seen your double somewhere at some time.'

'It must have been a person like me; it could not have been me,' she answered simply.

Upon that subject, at all events, Miss Miles had no reserves. As she owned, so far as she knew, no female relative save her mother, and as her mother was as unlike her as it is ever possible for a mother to be, she felt no anxiety on the subject of her accidental resemblance to any human being.

'Do you like Fisherton?' he

asked, by way of turning the conversation.

'Very much,' she said. 'This is such a pleasant change after school-life.'

'I should have thought it very much like school,' he remarked, with a significant glance ahead.

'You mean the children. Well, perhaps in that way it is. But then there are not so many of them, and they have not been drilled to one pattern. Even when they are naughty they are amusing—perhaps more amusing than at any other time. And for me, this existence means freedom. One can run about and do as one likes—and one gets better things to eat—and one goes out to nice parties sometimes—and Mr. Wright is so kind—and Mrs. Wright has taught me so much—and indeed I shall always love Fisherton—to the last day of my life!'

'See how the old and the young sometimes agree,' he said, with a little grimace in his voice. 'I like Fisherton now very much better than I imagined it possible I should ever like any place again. But here we are at the church.'

There they were indeed, and the bell had done tolling, and Mr. Wright was already in the reading-desk when the family proceeded up the aisle.

Still holding Rosie by the hand, Mrs. Wright entered the square pew, which with some difficulty contained the twelve persons who now entered into possession of that well-cushioned, well-carpeted, well-hassocked domain.

Down on her knees beside her mother plopped the child, wondering exceedingly; and on her knees she remained till the exhortation had begun, when Mrs. Wright, resuming an erect position, placed Rosie, whose eyes were round as peas with astonishment, on a footstool beside her.

Round and round went Miss Rosie's glances. She surveyed the roof, the organ-loft, the congregation, and with the intensest curiosity followed the movements of the sexton, as he ushered late arrivals into their pews.

Then suddenly her eye fell on the clergyman, who was then saying:

'With a pure heart and humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace.'

Miss Rosie, recognising him, cried out in a shrill voice which reached the farthest corner of the church:

'Why, mamma, there's papa in his night-shirt!'

I am bound to say the congregation behaved nobly at this crisis. First they tittered, and then they coughed; but, upon the whole, they confined their feelings to their handkerchiefs, which they stuffed into their mouths.

By the time every one was almost in convulsions, it occurred to Rosie that she had misbehaved herself, and looking at Curran, who knelt beside her, she put her finger inside her lips, and the pair laughed audibly—like the rest.

As for Bella Miles, she rose when the *Venite* commenced, but, unlike the others, she asked Roderick to open the pew door, and walked out of the church, looking like a very ghost.

When she reached home, according to Nuree Mary's account of the proceedings, she fell to laughing and crying on the sofa—laughing till she cried, and crying till she laughed.

'Indeed, ma'am, I thought to put on my bonnet and fetch the doctor from the sermon.'

No doubt the doctor would have liked the interruption; but Bella Miles felt very thankful his devotions had not been disturbed on her account.

(To be continued.)

## THE DISH OF LAPWINGS À LA TANTALE.

SIR FRANCIS KITCHENHAM was not a bad man, but his perfect selfishness made him unpatriotic, like his father before him. This latter gentleman had built a mansion in Paris, because he hated the trouble of listening to grumbling tenants on his estates; and his heir was even more of a model absentee than he. Sir Francis bought pictures, never to look at them, much less to lend to charitable exhibitions. He sometimes gave away coppers in the street, but more because they smelt metallic, and the Arabs annoyed him, than from pity. If he had friends to dine with him, it was because he hated eating alone; and, besides, they told him all the news, sang the newest songs, brought the latest quotations of the Bourse, and so saved him from reading the papers or going to theatres or stockbrokers. The restaurateurs of Paris had converted him into a gourmand as inveterate as the hero of Sue's novel upon that sin, and he gloried in it. For many years his English farmers had groaned at that extra percentage which lavishly paid his cook, a Normandy woman of rare gifts in the culinary way. When Brigitte was at work, the exquisite odours from her pots and pans inundated the Avenue Brillat-Savarin, and mingled with the floral perfumes of the Parc Monceau. Future prime ministers even travelled from the dusty garrets by the Luxembourg to munch their *gâteau 'pour trois-s'* in that savoury atmosphere, and a prospectus was once issued in the 'Canard sans Politique' for an Asylum of Dyspeptics in a neighbouring house.

Sir Francis was proud of his

cook, who was equally his house-keeper, and never tired of chanting her praises to his two cronies, M. Fourmillion, retired editor of the *Bouche de Gargantua*, 'journal des deux mondes épicuriens,' and Colonel Haggis, a dubiously warlike gentleman, who, though under fifty, gave it out that he had figured prominently at Waterloo. Though Brigitte was not comely, and looked a good sixty years old, this trio always hailed her with enthusiasm as she appeared at dessert, a shining knife in her apron-string, her *cordons Neu*, and a silver ladle 'at the carry.'

Though Sir Francis's name was often hinted at in the *chroniques* of Jules Lecomte, Noriac, Véron, and the other purveyors of gossip, as an English eccentric after the pattern of Seymour, Hertford, Fraser, and so on, his gastronomic reputation was known but to a chosen few. It was from one of the most eminent of these acquaintances that came the following shell into the camp of peace, a letter thus worded:—

'Offices of the "Almanach du Goût."

'DEAR MILORD,—The bearer is a wonderful *cuisinier*. Not a mere man of talent, but a genius, ripe as Dumas himself. When once you shall have tried him you will over-tire him, and learn then how much lusciousness there is in life. Wishing you a hearty appetite, believe me, &c.,

'CHARLES MONSELET.'

Sir Francis was at table with his two boon companions. The bearer of the missive had announced himself with a long and strong pull of the doorbell, still ringing. He was a surprising



object, being full six feet in height, broad-shouldered, and imposing. But, quite the opposite of all *chefs* past, present, and to come, this man seemed to have ruined his constitution prematurely by some dreadful task. His sallow, wrinkled phiz resembled that of a Saint Laurence by a Goya or Ribera. The three feasters' astonishment was complete, as they vainly sought for the plump, unctuous cheeks and saponaceous smile usually the appanage of the profession.

'Are you really the gentleman recommended to me?' inquired Sir Francis.

'Really, milord, and my name's Blague, at your lordship's service.'

'A pretty name,' remarked the host, who never liked to offend people, in speech at least; 'but, if you will excuse my surprise, I must say you look rather—rather, you know, fagged out for a good cook.'

M. Blague sighed like the Dying Gladiator at the moment of declining life 'under the thumb.' 'My wrinkles are so many stripes won upon the battlefield. One attains the unreachable only by dint of superhuman struggles—'

Colonel Haggis, who was sipping the bubbles off a thimbleful of Glenlivet, swallowed a drop the wrong way and shook the room with his cough; the ex-editor felt his heart climb up into his mouth, and the host did not even try to understand this oration.

'I see you are a man of merit,' he hastened to say, 'and my regret is stupendous that I cannot accept your offer. My household is complete.'

'Perfectly complete,' observed the ex-editor.

'Completely complete,' echoed the Scotchman.

'I feel as if a thunderbolt had hashed me,' replied the suppliant; 'but your decision is made before

you know what I can do. Now I do know, your lordship, your tastes and fancies. I have divined what direction your superior appetite takes, and I can anticipate its tendencies and feed it on the march! You must overlook my persistence, because men like myself must have masters of your sort. With my prophetic eye I have seen that I shall end my days under your lordship's roof.'

'But the present mistress of the kitchen?' muttered the ex-editor, alarmed at a rustle of petticoats at the door.

'She may stay,' said M. Blague, loftily, as Caesar spoke of the Serpent of the Nile, 'to peel the potatoes. I may even let her roll out the crust for meat pies and mince the cold mutton—'

A peal of angry exclamations came in at the keyhole: Brigitte was listening. This alarm recalled her master to a sense of the situation. 'Enough, sir,' said he in a curt tone. 'Your obstinacy offends me. I am astonished that M. Monselet, so careful about introducing people, should have sent you up the Boulevard Malesherbes.'

'I have sent him up a dinner many's the time,' retorted the stranger unaffectedly.

There was a pause after this clincher, during which the master of the Hôtel Kitchenham stared at the ceiling.

'I beg to make one delicate remark,' continued M. Blague. 'Love of gain does not impel me. I am aware you are vastly rich, and I am downright glad of that from my point of view. But I want little to subsist upon: give me twenty francs a-month, and what your valet will share with me in cast-off clothes; or, for additional argument, you may do your own marketing.'

'That's not my style,' answered

Sir Francis, somewhat stung; for he looked twice at a napoleon before spending it. 'So you would labour in sheer love of art?'

'I would,' responded the mysterious visitor. 'I am a veteran on the retired list. Though not yet forty, I have been through the fire too often. The toasting-fork is as fatal as a bayonet; and I'd as lief stand before the mouth of a mitrailleuse as that of an oven.'

'You win upon one on better acquaintance,' said Sir Francis, quite genially, 'and you speak of your calling like a true expert. I am therefore distressed at bowing you out; but once telling is as good as ten times, and it's impossible.'

'Surely you won't send me away without a taste of my quality,' urged M. Blague, with the despair of a drowning man. 'I don't ask a month's trial—only a week's—nay, but a day's. I ask for no pay; for this is now a question for my own self-satisfaction.'

The Lucullus, bewitched in spite of himself, was relenting, when the Colonel, seeing the door shake behind which the jealous cook was posted, trod on his toe. Sir Francis returned under the yoke and shook his head.

'Ah!' said M. Blague, with a bitter smile, 'you are afraid of your housekeeper. She has her eye upon you from close by here, and you, oh, milord without a backbone, you quiver before your cook like a jelly. Tell me, is she the woman to simmer you Algerian locusts in *crème de bulbul*?'

'I daresay,' answered the Englishman, with a moistening lip.

'And can she do Persian caftans in blended spices?'

'I fancy so,' answered the Englishman, nibbling the tip of his tongue.

'But can she send up the giant butterflies of Brazil on toast of sponge-cake *au naturel*?'

'I'm pretty sure.'

'Then,' proceeded M. Blague, without wincing, 'she stands on a higher pedestal than I imagined. Very well, milord, I see that I am losing my time, and I leave you. You must kindly overlook my intrusion, gentlemen.'

The great cook took his hat, and moved towards the door; but his step grew slower and more slow, till stopping, he staggered, and suddenly masking his face with his emaciated fingers, he exclaimed:

'Ah! I see that you know all. I have been betrayed, or how else could you be so ferociously cruel as to be deaf to my entreaty? You plunge me into the cauldron of Fatality! So must it be, and I will fulfil my destiny! I must carry out the feats which are revealed to me by my science. Know ye that I have already attained the climax of cookery, the acme of appetite, yea, the *summum bonum* of palatable raptures! Solomon Caus must build his engine, Palissy must bake his platters, Fulton must propel his steamboat—and my secret oozes out of me at my fingers' ends. I would have consented to anything; but you have rejected me. Now I shall tickle your palates with the promise of my unheard-of discovery, and my terms shall be: a thousand francs a-month, perquisites, pin-money, my tailor and bootmaker's bill liquidated, and I shall serve you only once a-year, one single, solitary, unique time! For that one space I shall have ten thousand francs bonus; and on the following day I shall go off on my holiday of eleven months nine-and-twenty days, and in leap year one day more!'

'What do you mean?—what does he mean?' faltered Sir Francis, losing his Britannic coolness. 'The man plays the mischief with my gullet. He titillates me, he worries

me. By George, he's spoilt my dinner!

'Haven't you understood me?' queried M. Blague mournfully. 'Your obtuseness is a national evil. I am the sole inventor of "Lapwings garnished with Fern-seed à la Tantalus!"'

The ex-editor of 'The Gargantua Mouth' seemed struck; for he rose in his easy-chair and studied the speaker's livid countenance in stupefaction. But the host, without reflecting, pounced upon the cook with juvenile petulancy.

'I want nothing from you, sirrah!' ejaculated he; 'I don't even care to hear of your dishes. For the love of heaven take yourself away! Be off, or I'll send for the *sergents-de-ville*!'

'Fare thee well, O son of Albion!' returned the snubbed inventor, abruptly departing. 'Thou resemblest the savage to whom an appetising oyster first opened his mouth. Take a last long look at me, for me you will never see again. But you will learn too soon what an Apician morsel you have spurned aloof. Farewell—I am sorry for you! But Waterloo is avenged!'

M. Fourmillion sprang up to pursue him; but the Scotchman cannily caught him by the napkin spread over his waistcoat.

'Let the crazy de'il go,' said he.

'By all means,' said Sir Francis. 'I repeat, he has done for my dinner.'

But M. Fourmillion, though not an agile man, broke away, and trundled down the stairs. The *conciérge* had seen the stranger stream past him like a shadow, murmuring, 'My secret will go with me to the infernal kitchen!'

The ex-editor, frightened at this despairing threat, returned to find his friends astounded at his activity.

'That knavish fellow,' he explained, 'offered us the Lapwings

à la Tantalé. I've heard of them somewhere as a rare and curious dish. I have been bored to write a page or two for the "Gourmand's Almanach," and I would like that recipe.'

'Pish!' said the Scotchman, 'Did you notice the extraordinary pretensions of the daft body? He wanted to cook for the pure love of the thing, one while, and then he prated graspingly like a Carême.'

'It's strange,' remarked the host; 'but we need not be uneasy when we have Brigitte at hand.'

The woman made her appearance with a bunch of flowers for a breastknot. That was of good augury, for she decked herself out only on days of contentment. She curtsied, stood primly, and tranquilly waited.

'Brigitte,' said Sir Francis, 'you are a blue ribbon of the cookery race. The *chef* of the Café Anglais calls you into consultation on decisive days, and Brébant's would win an European reputation with a tithe of your skill. I have banked all my trust in you, and believe it is soundly placed.'

The two parasites nodded.

'How does it happen, therefore,' he proceeded, 'that you have never let us discuss lapwings garnished with fern-seed, Tantalus-fashion?'

Brigitte seemed to have just arrived by the *Guppian* Way; but, after pondering, she answered sagely:

'I never heard tell of them, milord.'

'Just learn, will you? The present company will be kind enough to call to dinner on Thursday. We'll have the lapwings in the second course.'

On the appointed day a certainly excellent repast came to the board, but the birds were not present.

'The fact is, milord,' said the

cook, 'I have inquired after them of a hundred different parties. Not one ever heard of the dish. There was a waiter in the Palais Royal, at a fixed-price house, who offered me the recipe for five francs. I was fool enough to hand over the money for a scrap of paper, which said, "C'est du taureau irlandais saupoudré de pierre de Blarnéi."'

'Impossible!' said the ex-editor.

'Irish bull, sprinkled with blarney-stone in powder!' repeated the absentee noble, in disgust. 'Why, the rogue swindled you. Brigitte, I must speak to you plainly. You owe it to my cuisine, mine honour, and your own reputation, to overcome this obstacle. Attend to this mysterious preparation before everything, and don't be misled by cock-and-Irish-bull recipes. We all will hunt up the lapwings ourselves, as well.'

'Ahem!' coughed the Scotchman. 'I have read in Robbie Burns, or maybe it was Shakespeare, that fern-seed is not easily found; and lapwings may be just as hard to catch as phoenixes. I am a bit perplexed, now, that you got quit of the queer soul in a manner so sudden.'

'I have repented already,' returned Sir Francis frankly; 'but, that's done; and, anyway, we shall find him again.'

The next day he drove over the bridge, to see M. Monselet; but that gentleman was 'out' of the 'Almanach des Gourmands' office, and his representative, though well knowing that M. Blague was a wonderfully good cook, could not give his address.

M. Fourmillion left the Colonel to advertise in 'Galignani,' whilst he explored the principal restaurants, asking up the *chef*, and chatting winningly with his lieutenants. At last, one master-cook recalled a clever chap, whom Chevet, the Parisian Fortnum and

Mason, who is also fishmonger and game-purveyor, had engaged. His culinary erudition was Johnsonian; he was a Dumas-Lexicon of eating. The editor found him head waiter at the Grand Hôtel Café. He was an elderly man, as daintily dressed as an English duke on his wedding-day at the Abbey, and sententious as a parliamentary solicitor.

'Lapwings with fern-seed, Tantalus-fashion,' repeated he, after he had heard the other out gravely. 'The name is rather familiar. It is a dish—beyond a doubt—an uncommon dish. I think the Crown Prince called for it at St. Cloud, when they captured a man who named himself the Baron de Brisse.'

'Yes, yes; but what sort of dish is it?'

'Monsieur Fourmillion,' retorted the waiter, drawing himself up to his full height, without rumpling his white tie, 'I take orders, but never touch a plate. I shall consider it as a special favour if you will state, in your article upon me, that I never set foot in a kitchen—never!'

The inquirer tendered his excuses, and departed, as much disappointed as his patron-lord. Meanwhile, the Scotchman had an idea he had won the cup. While at Galignani's, he had premeditatedly offered his mull to the oldest frequenter of the reading-room—a well-preserved character, in military black stock and well-brushed coat of an exploded cut, who is supposed to be correspondent of no end of English journals. He quite warmed up, what with the Regent's mixture and the Colonel's dry recital of his dilemma, and made him clearly repeat the name of the rare dish.

'Strange!' muttered he, between his sneezes. 'I have certainly heard of tantalising dishes; but I don't know of lapfern and wing-

seed among them. But I tell you who can tell you, if anybody in town is able, and that's my old friend who feeds the birds in the Luxembourg Gardens. Try him the first sunny day.'

But this hopeful scent drew blank, too, for the aged philavis even grew angry at the question being put to him, and stormed and gesticulated at 'such "sells" being practised upon a man of his years, who had survived two sieges of Paris, by a foreigner too,' that Colonel Haggis beat a hasty retreat.

'Ah, Blague!' cried Sir Francis, when the three were met, 'thou art avenged!'

Thenceforward the trio lost weight visibly. An Iliad would not comprise their journeys. The advertisement columns on the boulevards and in the journals called for 'Blague,' till the street Arabs caught up the cry. Blague was offered his own terms to 'return to his afflicted' victims; a fortune had been left him by a distant relative; an eccentric English spinster wished to wed a cook of his exact description. All was fruitless; sham Blagues invaded the Parc Monceaux, and were shamefully shown the door, but the Simon Pure was undiscoverable. Unappeased desire haunted the house which had excluded the genius, and robbed the three gluttons of appetite. The consciousness of her shortcomings made Brigitte commit blunders, yea, outrages even, upon the most innocent of white sauces. That famous kitchen was fallen into its sere-ous days.

M. Fourmillion, as he became lean as in his toilsome student life, recovered his dash and daring of that period. He was the first to rebel against the pangs of indigestion and wasting away. He averred to his friends that he

would not pine into a shadow without a struggle, and announced his intention to travel—to make the tour of the world if need be.

'And I,' observed the Scotchman, quite kindled, 'I will ransack Paris for this secret, and question every soul, from the Armenian at the Library to the cabaret-keeper of the quarrymen!'

'And I,' said Sir Francis, with a great gulp, as he pushed away his favourite mussels in champagne vinegar, untasted, 'I will go to London, where everything arrives eventually, they say.'

They did not name their missions, they promised nothing, but they touched glasses, lifting their hands in concert much as the three Swiss pledge themselves in the opera.

Several months went by; London was amazed at the appearance of the Frenchified Kitchenham, but soon forgot him when it was eating-houses he spent his time within. To him came the correspondence of his allies. Not one valuable grain enriched the plenty of dry chaff unearthed by the Colonel. One day, even, he despairingly wrote: 'M. Loredan Larchey has imparted to me an extract from an unique antique MS. in the library about the blood of a lapwing rendering a man invisible. Does this in any way account for our not finding M. Blague? I fear so.'

M. Fourmillion's letters were pleasanter reading; with his eloquent pen he expatiated upon the kindest works of man. He told of Bordeaux and its wine; Phalsbourg, where peach-stones were made to disgorge prussic acid to flavour cordials; Strasbourg and its *pâtés*; Ostend and its oysters; Calcutta and curried chicken; Port Philip and kangaroo steak;

Fiji and pork à la *missionnaire froide*; California and its colossal vegetables; Chicago and prairie fowl; Silver City and buffalo hump; Albany and its 'beef'; New York and its baked shad, broiled river bass, strawberry short-cake, and Maillard's ices; Boston and its brown bread and baked pork and beans; Baltimore and its oysters; Charleston and its mammoth prawns; Long Island and its 'chowder,' and clams, 'hard and soft shell'; the West Indies and their fruit; the Cunarders and 'Irish stew'; Liverpool and the first real English beefsteak after coming off the steamer; and London with green-goose, roast beef, and pheasant at Kitchingham House, for the finish.

M. Fourmillion ate these alone, for the master, tired of his native country already, had gone to Arcachon Spa, committing slow suicide by eating that ideal sardine, the *royan*, and the muddy mullet, that woodcock of the waters.

Sir Francis had made the acquaintance of several bathers, congenial spirits who threw stones into the waves until they had appetite enough to do justice to the spread at the hotel. According to good old custom, mine host took the head of the table to preside. One day he got as whole seas over as David's sow. As he lolled his head in his arm-chair, his right-hand man heard him mumble:

'Don't leave me! stay with me for ever; make yourselves at home! drink away, boys. "For he's a jolly good fellow," and shall have anything you call for—anything you like for yourselves! Will you have herring and point? "Nid de jument poulinière au lait de pigeon?" or lapwings à la *Tantale*, or any other tail? Give your orders, gen'lmen, give your—ha, ha, ha!'

Sir Francis was sobered in an instant. He recoiled to the door, and with a pretty steady hand scribbled matter for two telegrams. It was the less difficult because the message was only the one word, 'Come!'

In two days the Colonel, and in three days the ex-editor, were shaking his hand. By special favour they were admitted to seats at supper at the hotel-keeper's table. It was a sociable banquet, where the ripe old wines of La Gironde were quaffed freely. During dessert the Scotchman craftily began the attack.

'Ah—h—h!' said he, 'that is indeed a bonny set-out. Your idea of a bill of fare is logically and profoundly thought over, and you've carried out the notion perfectly. There is nothing wanting, positively nothing.'

'There might be a trifle in the way of improvement,' insinuated M. Fourmillion, suavely.

'Do you mean the—the—you know?' said the Englishman.

'Yes.'

'Why what could be altered for the better?' said Boniface, more annoyed than he cared to show.

'Well, don't you think,' continued the man from the Land of Cakes, 'that in lieu of yonder snipe-pies flanked with ortolans—as we had game previously—another centre dish would have looked better? I don't criticise, but it struck me that some—lapwings in fernseed, à la Tantalus, for instance—'

'Oh, indeed!' observed the hotel-keeper in an icy tone.

The three accomplices glanced at each other.

'It is far from my mind to wound your feelings,' the Colonel hastened to say. 'We are already regular boon companions, so we may speak openly. Don't you



agree with me that lapwings and fernseed garnish——'

'I don't know any such thing,' replied the host, boldly.

'Really?'

'I never heard of such fowl being cooked.'

So much impudence shocked the hearers, who blushed red to the very whites of their eyes.

'How does it happen then,' retorted the Englishman smartly, 'that you spoke of them a couple of days ago, when you laboured under so pretty a sunstroke from that lively old sauterne?'

'You must be under some error,' replied the hotel proprietor.

'And why do you look so troubled if you were not trying to gull us? You do know the dish of lapwings, and perhaps it was the celebrated M. Blague who initiated you into the great mystery.'

'Blague!' reiterated the man, staring.

'Don't deny it!'

'I have no need to deny. Have I got to defend myself? You are under my roof, gentlemen. I offer you a meal, and you foot the bill. The simplest thing in the world. My reputation is at stake, and you are able to appreciate me; that's the tie betwixt us. I feel capable of my grandest efforts for you, within the bounds of what is possible, of course. Do you wish to overstep the circle of ordinary cookery? Tell me as much frankly, and I'll do marvels. What do you say to a sacred monkey, roast, with hasheesh sauce? Or would you prefer a shell-shedding lobster, on dip-toast, smothered in curry cream? I will perform these feats with my own hands, and will have Dr. Bain-Marie of the Chalybeate Springs at hand, so as to guard against accidents. But don't talk nonsense to me.'

'Eh, roast monkey, with ha-

VOL. XXVII.—NO. CLX.

sheesh,' muttered Colonel Haggis, pulling at his sandy moustache.

'Soft-shell lobster in curry cream!' faltered the ex-editor, going over to the tempter.

'You are a weak-kneed collection of demoralised surrenderers,' cried Sir Francis, forced to coin epithets equal to the situation; 'mere devourers of unsettled coffee and steak broiled in its own juice! What are such commonplaces to me? I want lapwings à la Tantalus! and Tantalian lapwing I mean to have!'

Upon this vociferation several waiters came in, and with praiseworthy promptitude ranged themselves behind their master. He, flushed with anger, rose slowly, and with admirable self-command, uttered these commendable words:

'My lord and gentlemen, you are here in a fair-dealing and honourable house. I make my money by feeding people well, at moderate prices.' ('Hear, hear!' from the waiter who 'spoke ze Anglia.') 'I welcomed you with pleasure; you paid handsomely, and so I was glad you put up here. But after this public scandal, after what has happened between us, I beg you to accept my resignation as host.'

'Do you mean to put us out?' inquired the ex-editor, who be-thought him that his name in connection with a duel with an hotel-keeper would perhaps double the Almanach's circulation that year.

'No, monsieur; this is merely a parting. Every man is master of his own conscience. I could not maintain amicable relations with you again.'

'But the matter can be explained,' interposed the Colonel.

'There has been too much talk already, sir; pray let the matter rest here, for all our sakes.'

'Do you fancy for one moment,'

blurted out Sir Francis, the British lion's heart at last swelling with rage, 'that we are going to leave without a row?'

'I trust so,' returned the landlord, with a frigid smile, which almost sufficed to *frapper* the wine.

Not only had the disturbance summoned up the kitchen retainers, but some fishermen had dropped into the hotel. The cook's subordinates had their knives in their girdles, ready to leap out, so affected were their bearers by the landlord's manner. Colonel Haggis took in the situation with a Dugald-Dalgetty air, and suddenly rose to his feet, advising his companions to go to the neighbouring hotel.

'Your luggage shall follow you instantler,' postscripted the host. 'But, if I may advise you, I should say, Don't make a long stay hereabouts!'

The removal took place without hindrance. Early next morning the new landlord knocked them up to express his delight at having their custom; but he gave them to understand that his rooms were all let to a very rich and very large Spanish family, of neutral politics, which had been bombarded out of their property between the Carlists and the Alfonsists.

'A nod is as good as a blink,' observed Colonel Haggis. 'My opinion is, we had best get into civilised parts—Bordeaux, for instance.'

'How pat it falls,' struck in the host; 'the stage-coach is at the door. I'll book three places.'

In a couple of hours the trio plunged into the concourse of bustling people in St. John's station at Bordeaux. They had spoken but little during the drive, for they were as devoid of fancies as the plains they crossed. All their hopes were blighted, and

their journeys useless. They were walking in Indian file, or like ducks in a thunderstorm, bag in hand, hunting up the buffet, tripped up by the luggage barrows, jostled by fellow-passengers, shouldered aside by the porters. A scream pierced their ears; a long train was streaking out of the station; the three Werthers sorrowfully eyed it. Suddenly Colonel Haggis uttered a cry, unintelligible to most of its hearers. 'Auld cloutie!' said he; and, dropping his sword-cane and bag, he shot through the throng like a pea from a hot shovel, crossed the metals, grasped the rail at the end of the last car, and disappeared at the tail of the train, with his legs and body trailing out at an angle of a few degrees from the horizon, like a new danger signal! His two friends exchanged a look of wonder, when a faint cry echoed under the station's lofty vault:

'Shall—telegraph—refreshment bar!'

They comprehended, and verily their faith was rewarded with this document:—

'*Railways Telegraphs.* HAGGIS, Toulouse. Handed in, 2 P.M. TO-QUITCHINIM, buffet, St. John Station, Bordeaux. Blague nailed seen spoken to come on to Marseilles.'

Sir Francis and M. Fourmillion uttered a dignified but enthusiastic whoop of joy, and fainted in each other's arms. The barmaid in chief, who had fondly imagined that the three hours' stay there of the Anglican noble portended an early offer of his hand, his mansion in Cranbourne Alley, and his villa at Mile End, tossed off a glass of third-class sherry, and was taken home in a cab, moaning something about 'loss of illusions when we are young.' She was forty-nine to a second.

Meanwhile the revived hunters

of the cook had taken train to Marseilles, where the Colonel, his face bruised, his eyes blackened, and both arms in a sling, was waiting at the station. Spite of his dilapidated aspect, his eyes sparkled and his step was light. Ten years of his age were lifted off him.

'All right,' said he, shrinking back from shaking hands with them. 'I see you are looking for my man, but he is not here. Things don't always move as we wish. A setting hen never waxes fat. Who lives till the morrow shall see. The well-laid plans of men and mice oft gang——'

'Gang large enough of proverbs,' interrupted Sir Francis. 'Just let us know what has passed.'

'Excuse me. What did you think of my departure as a specimen of abrupt disappearance? I have been up before a magistrate, and forced to pay a fine. But what of that? I had seen my man. Blague was in the train that was starting. You saw me grasp my opportunity. I have gone two leagues on a buffer, and been fined for entering a railway carriage in motion. I have caught a beastly cold in the head; but that is a mere detail. At the first station I darted at the compartment wherein my prize travelled first-class. The porter said it was taken, and I was thrust into the next. At every stoppage I watched the door. It never opened—not even for refreshment—for he carries a spirit cooking apparatus, and cooks his meals on the road, the artful dog! At Agen he did step out, and with him a pompous, ponderous, surly German—a forbidding character. I hovered round them, but they gave me the cold shoulder. No matter again! We resumed our journey. I shall not give you the

entire tale of my ups and downs in fears and hopes. Blague bears no grudge. He accepted my apologies, but he is engaged. In vain I offered him a premium. The Prussian is an army contractor who supplied portable sausages to his countrymen, and is immeasurably rich. He had never known what a stomach was until he fell in with Blague the inimitable, and he has made him his sole heir. I did not press the point, but my winsomest phrases have been exerted to captivate his confidence—perhaps his friendship.'

'Splendid!' said Sir Francis; 'and as regards the famous dish?'

'There was the rub. I did not dare risk the mention. M. Blague seems to be suspicious, for he smiled queerly as we conversed. I waited for your reinforcements before giving battle, thinking I should feel stronger with such supports. He is coming to breakfast at the "Hotel of Marseilles and of the Universe."'

Blague was as punctual as a king at the tryst. He walked in like an ordinary person. He put my lord and M. Fourmillion quite at their ease, though he rather daunted them. Colonel Haggis cracked a mild joke about the modest little dinner he 'set before the king' of cooks, though really the *chef* of the 'H. M. and U.' had outdone himself. The ex-editor related the most piquant anecdotes of Dumas, Dr. Véron, Joliet, and the like; and Sir Francis actually made a pun which Sydney Smith would not have disclaimed. At dessert, M. Blague rose to speak, the others being more or less incapable of joining the Good Templars.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'you must credit me with enough sense to have seen through the motive of

your asking me here. I have forgotten the past, but I do not wish to lull you with wild hopes. I shall not promise you what I cannot perform.'

A deathly silence greeted this speech, during which the bubble could be heard to burst on the beaker's brim, and a fly to buzz over the tarts on the sideboard.

'Your regret has been publicly proclaimed, for you have appealed to me in the press. That is a claim on my gratitude. My reason for silence is that I had withdrawn from the world to end my days in *La Trappe*.' He laid an unaccountable stress upon the word. 'Unhappily, urgent solicitations, my yielding nature, and my ambition once more to carry out my exalted ideas, drew me again into the world. Baron Wüstling, my friend and master, had tasted my cookery. He had gone through every joy that money procures, and sought for me to impart to him the unsating delights of the table. He penetrated the monastery, offered me half his fortune, and threatened me with his demise at my cell door if I refused to follow him. I gave way, and here I am. The very dish you dream of he besought of me. I would like to let you share his table and there give you a common satisfaction. But that is not to be thought of, for Herr Wüstling cannot bear your Frenchman. It is true I am your compatriot, but a cook is of all countries, and of none when of my rank. On the day after to-morrow'—here Blague's voice quavered—'I mean to execute the dish you wot of—for my master. Give me a week to recover from that Armageddon of Appetite—and then I hope to satisfy you as well.'

Sir Francis's face brightened up. 'Name your own terms,' he said to the great *artiste*.

'My terms are simple,' was the reply. 'You shall pay me one hundred thousand francs, or—if you account that dear—simply walk out of the dining-room without even a word of thanks.'

The three friends, even to the Colonel, reddened. The Englishman felt a twinge as he thought of his farmers, perhaps compelled to travel third-class when they should go up to London for the Cattle Show; and of his colliers, perhaps forced to renounce champagne and concertinas; but he bravely overcame that sentimental hesitation.

'Our thanks will consist, Monsieur Blague, in my counting you out one hundred thousand-pound Bank of England notes.'

'Ah! milord, you are worthy to indulge in such a luxury!' said Blague enthusiastically. 'It is a bargain. Now allow me to attend to my duties as well in your interest as my master's.'

Baron Wüstling, because of his nationality, had found living in French hotels unpleasant. He had therefore taken a whole house. During all the following day our three gourmands hovered round it. Blague remained indoors; but a multitude of kitchen attendants never ceased running out and in to collect comestibles from the dealers far and near.

Sir Francis gave a juvenile kettle-skimmer a five-franc piece to tell him what he was stirring. He related that the *chef* had locked himself up in the kitchen, into which the provisions he ordered were passed through a wicket. 'It smelt jolly good,' was *l'envoi* of the lad's information.

The momentous day arrived, at least for the Prussian, and the three watchers were struck by the appropriately solemn silence and stillness fallen upon the dwelling. No one came forth, the gateway

remained sealed up, the chimneys, which had smoked all night like a Dutchman, smoked no more, and the house seemed untenanted.

At five the Prussian dined. Six, then seven struck, and darkness was coming on. Sir Francis questioned the spies he had stationed around the mansion; for he felt uneasy. He could not sleep without shaking Blague's hand before retiring.

Suddenly, distant outcries arose. An unwonted tumult was audible, as if many persons were tumbling downstairs over one another. The mansion doors flew open; a number of servants scattered in all directions, calling out for a doctor.

'I am a medical man,' said Sir Francis promptly. 'I am Dr. Parr, inventor of the pills from whose boxes three centuries look down upon us, and these are my assistants.'

He dragged his friends into the Prussian's abode, rushing down the stairs by a sure instinct into the kitchen. He opened the door, and beheld, among the cooks, turnspits, potato-peelers, and bottle-washers, the cold and pallid face of the unrivalled Blague, with clenched teeth, but the eyes still glowing with unutterable pride and triumph.

'Ha!' ejaculated the Englishman, 'what a mighty secret this Prometheus must have wrenched from the epicurean Olympus!'

The ex-editor bent over the *chef*, but rose shaking his head.

'He will sully no more stewpans with his broth.'

'Gone!' muttered the Englishman, 'and left no trace behind.'

'Stay,' said the Colonel, who had been peering round; 'here is his writing on the wall.'

And, in fact, upon the white plaster a stick of charcoal had inscribed these lines:—

'There is nothing new in France

—only one cook less, and one Prussian no more!—*BLAGUE.*'

'All is lost!' moaned Fourmilion, wringing his hands. 'Oh, what a grand soul has been served up to the Molochian table of Immortality!'

'Stop!' said Kitchenham, more practical; 'all is not lost. There's the German.'

The three shot up into the dining-room.

Before a sumptuous table, covered with a red damask cloth, glittering with silver and china, Herr Wüstling was expanding in a cosy arm-chair. His features were illumined with an expression of ineffable gratification, somewhat tempered with a charming surprise. An enormous Sèvres dish spread out its soft milky-white surface before him, over which his chubby hand, affectionately embracing a piece of bread, was slowly travelling, so as to collect conscientiously the last and minutest fragments which might still linger there. As the intruders bounded in, the ogre swallowed this gather-all, and his closing eyes seemed to emit one farewell and portentous wink.

'O, gänzlich hingegangen!' he uttered, in a very throaty voice.

'That's it!' shouted Sir Francis, pointing to the platter cleared by the Teutonic Jack Sprat, and stretching out his hand to seize it.

The Prussian was beyond opposing this impoliteness. His head sloped back, his eyes closed tight, and he smiled as he snored melodiously. He saw and heard nothing in his gastronomical ecstasy.

'Let him slumber,' said the Frenchman enviously. 'He is in no condition to answer us. Oh! and these are the men who thought to fry Paris in its own juice!'

'His nap will be over to-mor-

row,' said the Englishman excitedly, 'and then our day will come. My friends, just sniff this plate! What a novel aroma!—what a tempting revelation!—what a *sui generis* mystery! He hasn't left even a crumb soaked in the sauce, the shark!'

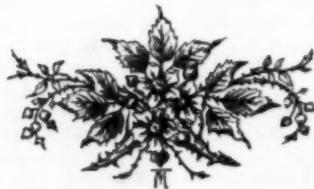
'Calm yourself,' interposed the Scotchman, 'and put down that dish; for we might get arrested, if caught with it. There's only one way out of this house. Let's hire a good roomy hackney coach with a lame nag, and spend the night in it here. Herr Warst Thing—I beg his pardon, Wüstling—cannot escape us. I'll bribe him to speak with a promise of caller herring! We will rebuild the temple, remodel the entire porker. Was it not with a funny-bone that Professor Owen reconstructed the *please-iosauros*?'  
\* \* \*

At six in the morning, Herr Wüstling woke up and made his will, leaving all his property to the

charity fund of the exiled Alsations and Lorrainers. At seven he threw himself out of the window, and, striking the top of the hackney coach below, had all the breath knocked out of his weighty body. At five minutes later Sir Francis Kitchenham lost his wits, and was taken to London to be cured. He never was cured; but he is quite harmless. He is that silver-haired gentleman in the claret coat, buff waistcoat, and plaid trousers, who escapes from the ward of his volunteer keeper, the military Scotch gentleman, to join the children under the oaks in Kensington Gardens making dirt pie. Colonel Haggis never interferes until he gets much too persistent in forcing his earthy pastry upon bystanders, and crying:

'This is proof positive I have discovered the secret of the celebrated Monsieur Blague; for these are the genuine Lapwings garnished with fernseed à la Tantale.'

HENRY L. WILLIAMS.







Drawn by Dower Wilson.

A CHASSE-STUDIO.

...and the Englishman ex-  
actly. "And then our day will  
come. My friends, just sniff this  
plate! What a novel aroma!—  
what a tempting revelation!—what  
a delicious mystery! He hasn't  
left even a crumb soaked in the  
sauce, the shark!"

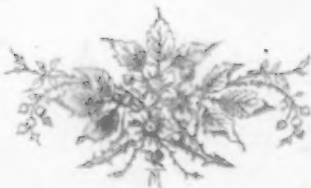
"Calm yourself," interposed the  
Scotchman, "and put down that  
dish; for we might get arrested, if  
caught with it. There's only one  
way out of this house. Let's hire  
a good roomy hackney coach with  
a lame nag, and spend the night  
in it here. Herr Worst Thing—I  
beg his pardon, Wüstling—cannot  
escape us. I'll bribe him to speak  
with a promise of caller herring!  
We will rebuild the temple, re-  
model the entire process. What  
not with a bang—like that Pro-  
fessor Owen reconstructed the  
paleo-construs?"

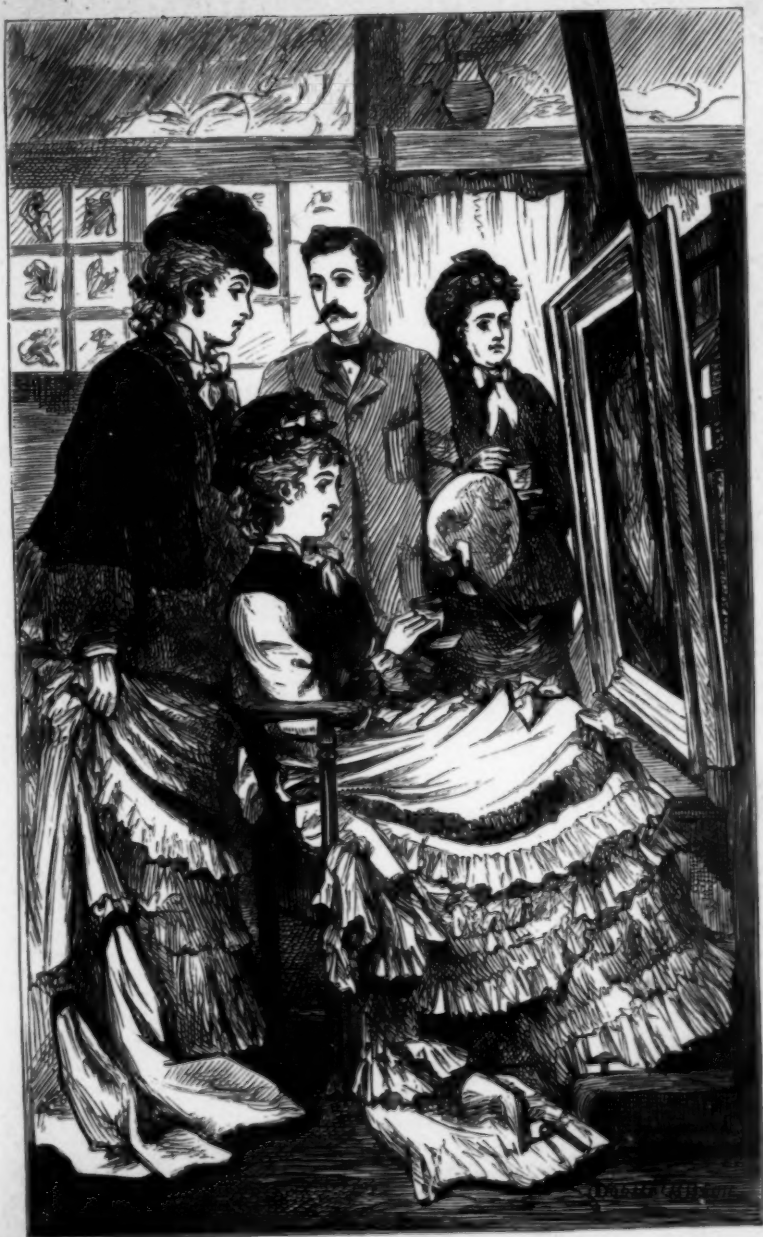
At six in the morning, Herr  
Wüstling woke up and made his  
will, leaving all his property to the

charity fund of the exiled Alsa-  
tians and Lorrainers. At seven he  
threw himself out of the window,  
and, striking the top of the hack-  
ney coach below, had all the breath  
knocked out of his weighty body.  
At five minutes later Sir Francis  
Kitchenham lost his wits, and was  
taken to London to be cured. He  
never was cured; but he is quite  
harmless. He is that silver-haired  
gentleman in the claret coat, buff  
waistcoat, and plaid trousers, who  
escapes from the ward of his vo-  
lunteer keeper, the military Scotch  
gentleman, to join the children  
under the oaks in Kensington Gar-  
dens making dirt pies. Colonel  
Blaque never interferes until he  
gets such too persistent in forcing  
his earthy poetry upon bystanders,  
and crying:

"This is proof positive I have  
discovered the secret of the cele-  
brated Monsieur Blague; for these  
are the genuine Lapwings gar-  
nished with fernseed à la Tantalé."

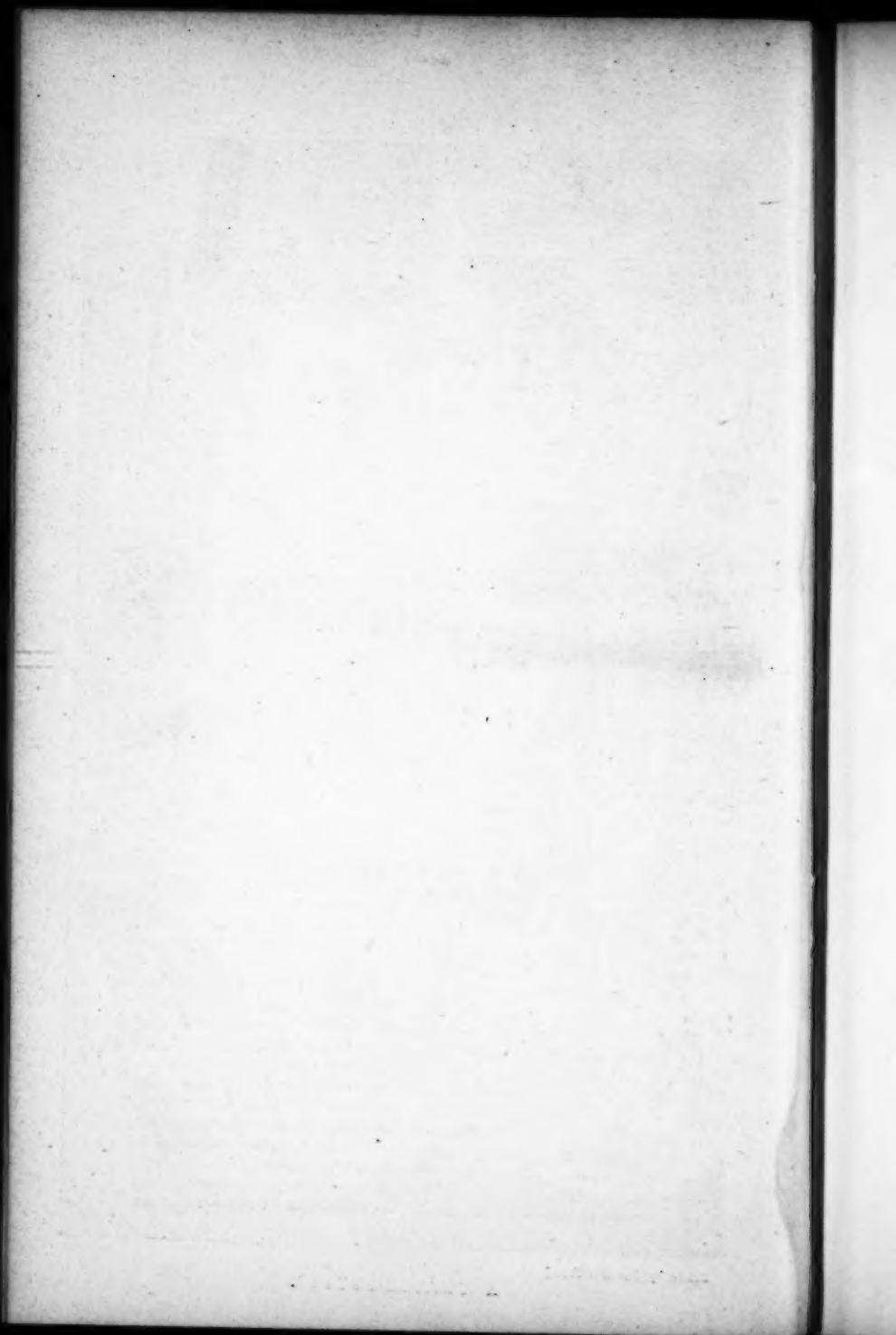
HENRY L. WILLIAMS.





Drawn by Dower Wilson.]

A CHASSE-STUDIO.



## GEORGE ELIOT IN DERBYSHIRE.

MANY critical articles have been written on the works of George Eliot, and amongst the lords and ladies of letters there is not much doubt now about the eminent position in literature of the author of 'Middlemarch.' In fiction, the novels of George Eliot are unrivalled as studies of English country life, and they are given to us in quiet, subtle sentences that will supply many future writers with their best phrases. These works have helped to make the English language richer and purer. They are the best specimens of powerful, simple English since Shakespeare. Many authors attempt to prove their strength by drenching our strong Saxon words in pools of modern mud, and then presenting us with strange compositions about impossible people. It is difficult to understand the works of such writers; and when, after much mental vexation, we fancy we have hit the real meanings, we often realise that we have wasted our time, and that the little kernels of sense do not repay us for the great trouble of cracking the huge rhetorical and mystical nuts. In the works of George Eliot we do not find any trickery of this kind. She has not spent her time in trying to hide her weakness, but in drawing marvellous pictures of life as she has seen it. She has given us her thoughts of ordinary men and women she has met, and she has talked to us of the unromantic places in which they have lived. She has not painted noble knights with nodding plumes, nor ladies pining in mysterious castles. She has been content to draw people who for the most part are neither very good nor very bad. She has taken

her characters from that very large majority of our fellow-countrymen of the insignificant stamp described in the fifth chapter of 'Amos Barton':—

'At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise; their eyes are neither deep and liquid with sentiment, nor sparkling with suppressed witticisms; they have probably had no hairbreadth escapes or thrilling adventures; their brains are certainly not pregnant with genius, and their passions have not manifested themselves at all after the fashion of a volcano. They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people—many of them—bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps gone out towards their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance—in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share.'

It is in the 'Scenes of Clerical Life' that we get the early impressions of the writer; and if we turn to her last work, we shall find that they have not deserted her.

In 'Adam Bede' she reminds us that our fellow-mortals must be accepted as they are. We can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and she tells us that it is these people amongst whom our life is passed that it is needful we should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people whose movements of goodness we should be able to admire—for whom we should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience.

'And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields—on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken brave justice.' So she is content to tell her simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they are; dreading nothing but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. 'Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion.' It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that she delights in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. Therefore, she asks, let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them. 'There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make

way with kindly courtesy.' These sentences may be taken as a key to nearly all George Eliot has written.

Dickens revealed the heroism of humble life, but he did so with exaggerated colours, and for his study he took specimens of mankind so rare that we can scarcely think of them as men and women who have lived in this world. Thackeray, though not so attractive as his rival, is often nearer to life. In the novels of George Eliot, however, there is more true painting than in either or both. She reminds us more of Fielding than of any other writer. With greater success than other novelists, she has shown us ordinary men and women as we have seen them. Take, for instance, Molly, the housemaid, in 'Adam Bede.' She has a turn-up nose and a protuberant jaw. The ordinary novelist would not be likely to give much attention to her unless for criminal purposes. But George Eliot shows us that she is a tender-hearted girl, and, as Mrs. Poyser said, a jewel to look after the poultry; but her stolid face showed nothing of this maternal delight, any more than a brown earthenware pitcher will show the light of the lamp within it.

It has been said that Shakespeare made the laws of his own land serve for all nations, and that he also made descriptions of his native county serve for all countries. We wish now to show or suggest that George Eliot has taken the greater part of her material from one county. It was, we think, about the hills and dales of romantic Derbyshire that she met many of the characters that fill her novels.

At the outset of our examination we will not fly at the strongest proof. We will begin with one word. It is 'nesh.' You will not



find it in an ordinary dictionary, and you may go from one end of England to the other without hearing it in conversation. Still, you may often hear the word in Derbyshire, and you will find it in the works of George Eliot. 'She gets more *nesh* and *dillicat* than iver,' says Mr. Bates of Hester, in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story.' In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Luke says to Maggie, 'Don't fret, miss; they're *nash* things, them lop-eared rabbits—they'd happen ha' died, if they'd been fed.' In Derbyshire, people also say 'gell' for 'girl,' and they have the same peculiarity in the novels of George Eliot. In 'Janet's Repentance,' Mrs. Jerome says, 'Hush, hush, Lizzie! little *gells* must be seen, and not heard.' Silas Marner too says, 'Eh, if it wasn't a sin to the lads to wish 'em made different, bless 'em, I should ha' been glad for one of 'em to be a little *gell*.' In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Mrs. Tulliver says, 'O dear, O dear, Maggie! what are you thinkin' of, to throw your bonnet down there? Take it upstairs, there's a good *gell*.' In Derbyshire one may often hear also 'chanch,' for 'chance.' There is an instance in 'Felix Holt, the Radical.' Tommy Tounsem says, 'I shall live at publics and see the world, and pick up 'quaintance, and get a *chanch* penny.' At the beginning of 'Adam Bede,' Mr. Carson says to the horseman who approaches the 'Donnithorne Arms,' 'I'm not this countryman, you may tell by my tongue, sir; the gentry's hard work to hunderstand 'em. I was brought hup among the gentry, sir, an' got the turn o' their tongue when I was a bye. Why what do you think the folks here says for "hevn't you?"—the gentry, you know, says "hevn't you:" well, the people about here says "hanna yey." It's what they call the dileck as is

spoke hereabout, sir. That's what I've heard Squire Donnithorne say many a time: "it's the dileck," says he.' Mr. Carson was right: there are people in Derbyshire who say 'hanna yey.' There might be many instances given to prove that the 'dileck' of the novels we have mentioned is the 'dileck' of Derbyshire. In 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' we are told that Mrs. Pettifer busied herself with rousing the kitchen fire, which was kept in under a huge 'raker'—a possibility by which the coal of the *Midland counties* atones for all its slowness and white ashes. The scenes of 'Felix Holt' are professedly fixed in the *Midland counties*. The story comes to us with a couplet from Drayton:—

'Upon the Midlands now the industrious  
muse doth fall,  
The shires which we the heart of Eng-  
land well may call.'

In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Mr. Glegg says, 'Well, well, neighbour Tulliver, you may be right; you may be right:

"When land is gone and money's spent,  
Then learning is most excellent."

I remember seeing those two lines  
wrote on a window at *Buxton*.'

To support the assertion that the work of George Eliot is closely linked with Derbyshire, we get our strongest evidence from 'Adam Bede.' It has often been mentioned by London correspondents that the story is founded on fact, but they have not said much to make good the statement. There are people in Wirksworth who have no doubt that 'Adam Bede' is a story of real life; and they say that they knew Dinah Morris by the name of Elizabeth Evans, and that they knew the brothers Adam and Seth Bede as the brothers William and Samuel Evans. They believe the story is 'wrong' here and there. For

instance, they say that Dinah did not marry Adam, but Seth. George Eliot, in a letter, begs the writer of this article to understand that Dinah Morris was never intended to be a representation of Mrs. Elizabeth Evans; and that any identification of the two (or of any other characters in 'Adam Bede' with real persons) would be protested against as not only false in fact, and tending to perpetuate false notions about art, but also as a gross breach of social decorum. But the story does not end here. We think we have a right to say what we know about William, and Samuel, and Elizabeth Evans. If it turns out that their lives are like the fiction lives of Adam and Seth Bede and Dinah Morris, this is not a reason why we should for ever hold our peace. We do not think we ought to be silent, even though we should now and then be faced by 'curious coincidences.' Elizabeth Evans played an important part in the rise of Methodism. The story of her life deserves a prominent place in the history of the movement. We have heard much about Susanna Wesley, Mary Fletcher, Sarah Ryan, Sarah Crosby, Sarah Lawrence, Lady Fitzgerald, Hester Ann Rogers, Grace Murray, Elizabeth Woolbridge, and the Countess of Huntingdon. We have heard something, too, of Elizabeth Evans. Why should we not hear more? She did probably more real work than most of the women we have mentioned. It is unfair to say that her life is not to be written because it has already been 'done' in fiction. Her name demands a less doubtful and different kind of honour. We do not know why her name should be concealed, or her labours, and birth-place and burial-place. The declaration that the story of such a life cannot be published because it is like the

story of a fiction heroine must be protested against as not only false in fact, and tending to perpetuate false notions about the duty of life, but also a gross breach of common sense.

William Evans, of Ellaston, was a joiner and builder. Considering the place in which he lived, he had a large business, and as he kept well to it, there is not so much known of him as of his brother, who became 'a Methody,' and a preacher. Particulars are given of the life of Samuel Evans in a *brochure* published in 1859 by Tallant and Co. It is called 'Seth Bede, "the Methody," his Life and Labours; chiefly written by himself.' This little work is now very rare. We have a copy before us. In it we are told that those who are familiar with the county of Derbyshire cannot have failed to notice the extreme simplicity of the inhabitants in the more secluded rural districts, and which the great modern innovator, the rail, has not yet altered in any material degree. We are told that the village referred to as Hayslope, in 'Adam Bede,' may still be seen, but little altered by the hand of time. 'True, the "Methodys" have a handsome chapel there, and the green where Dinah breathed forth holy prayers was enclosed in 1818; but the sign-board of the "Donnithorne Arms" still hangs out, and the red brick hall (now with unpatched windows) is in existence still. The peasantry have not advanced much, and have about the same twang and the same notions as their fathers. It is a slow place that village, where people live on with little exertion and no care.' Samuel Evans was born at Boston, about sixteen miles from Derby, and about four miles from Ashbourne, being pleasantly situated on the Dove. In 1857 it had 475 inhabitants, the sexes being so

nearly balanced, that 237 were males and 238 females. Samuel was born in 1777. We are told that his father was the village carpenter and undertaker, and was 'an honest and respectable man, as things went,'—or 'as this world goes'; but during the last years of his life he passed too much of his time in the village alehouse, to the great grief of his family. His melancholy death made a great impression upon his son Seth. It appears that the poor old man was out very late one night, and, in making his way home, accidentally fell into a brook, where he was found dead the next morning, although scarcely covered with water. In this way, too, Seth loses his father in the novel:—

"Seth, lad, if father isn't come home by the time we've had our breakfast, I think it'll be as well for thee to go over to Treddleson and look after him, and thee canst get me the brass wire I want. Never mind about losing an hour at thy work; we can make that up. What dost say?"

"I'm willing," said Seth. "But see what clouds have gathered since we set out. I'm thinking we shall have more rain. It'll be a sore time for th' hay-making if the meadows are flooded again. The brook's fine and full now: another day's rain 'ud cover the plank, and we should have to go round by the road."

"They were coming across the valley now, and had entered the pasture through which the brook ran.

"Why, what's that sticking against the willow?" continued Seth, beginning to walk faster. Adam's heart rose to his mouth: the vague anxiety about his father was changed into a great dread. . . . This was the first thought that flashed through Adam's conscience, before he had time to seize the coat, and drag out the tall, heavy body. Seth was already by his side, helping him; and when they had it on the bank, the two sons in the first moments knelt and looked with mute awe at the glazed eyes, forgetting that there was need for action—forgetting everything but that their father was dead."

One of Samuel's troubles was that his Methodism was not alto-

gether appreciated at home. He met with a good deal of quiet domestic ridicule. He says, 'My older brothers often tried to tease me; they entertained High Church principles. They told me what great blunders I made in preaching and prayer; that I had more zeal than knowledge.' But Samuel was ever kind and considerate with his mother and with his brothers. We find Seth surrounded with this home difficulty in the novel:—

"But, mother, thee know'st we canna love just where other folks 'ud have us. There's nobody but God can control the heart of man. I could ha' wished myself as Adam could ha' made another choice, but I wouldn't reproach him for what he can't help, and I'm not sure but what he tries to o'ercome it. But it's a matter as he doesn't like to be spoke to about, and I can only pray to the Lord to bless and direct him."

"Ay, thee't allays ready enough at prayin', but I donna see as thee gets much wi' thy prayin'. Thee wotna get double earnings o' this side Yule. Th' Methodies 'll niver make thee half the man thy brother is, for all they're a-makin' a preacher on thee."

"It's partly truth thee speak'st there, mother," said Seth, mildly; "Adam's far before me, an's done more for me than I can ever do for him. God distributes talents to every man according as He sees good. But thee mustna' undervally prayer. Prayer mayna bring money, but it brings us what no money can buy—a power to keep from sin, and be content with God's will, whatever He may please to send. If thee wouldst pray to God to help thee, and trust to His goodness, thee wouldstna be so uneasy about things."

"Unaisy? I'm i' th' right on't to be unaisy. Thee't gi' away all thy earnings, an' niver be unaisy, as thee'st nothin' laid up again' a rainy day. If Adam had been as aisy as thee, he'd niver ha' had no money to pay for thee. Take no thought for the morrow—take no thought—that's what thee't allays sayin'; an' what comes on't? Why, as Adam has to take thought for thee."

"Those are the words o' the Bible, mother," said Seth. "They don't mean as we should be idle. They mean we shouldna be over-anxious and worretin ourselves about what'll happen to-mor-

row, but do our duty, and leave the rest to God's will."

"Ay, ay, that's the way wi' thee: thee allays makes a peck o' thy own words out o' a pint o' the Bible's. I donna see hew thee't to know as 'take no thought for the morrow,' means all that. An' when the Bible's such a big book, an' thee canst read all thro't, an' ha' the pick o' the texes, I canna think why thee dostna pick better words as donna mean so much more ner they say. Adam doesna pick a that'n; I can understan' the tex as he's allays a-sayin', 'God helps them as helps theirsens.'"

"Nay, mother," said Seth, "that's no text o' the Bible. It comes out of a book as Adam picked up at the stall at Treddleson. It was wrote by a knowing man, but over-worldly, I doubt. However, that saying's partly true; for the Bible tells us we must be workers together with God."

"Well, how'm I to know? It sounds like a tex. But what's th' matter wi' th' lad? Thee't hardly atin' a bit o' supper. Dostna mean to ha' no more nor that bit o' oat-cake? An' thee lookst as white as a flick o' new bacon. What's th' matter wi' thee?"

"Nothing to mind about, mother; I'm not hungry. I'll just look in at Adam again, and see if he'll let me go on with the coffin."

"Ha' a drop o' warm broth?" said Lisbeth, whose motherly feeling now got the better of her "nattering" habit. "I'll set two-three sticks a-light in a minute."

"Nay, mother, thank thee; thee't very good," said Seth, gratefully; and encouraged by this touch of tenderness, he went on: "Let me pray a bit with thee for father, and Adam, and all of us—it'll comfort thee, happen, more than thee think'st."

"Well, I've nothin' to say again' it."

Lisbeth, though disposed always to take the negative side in her conversations with Seth, had a vague sense that there was some comfort and safety in the fact of his piety, and that it somehow relieved her from the trouble of any spiritual transactions on her own behalf.

We read that, destined as Seth Evans was to pass his lifetime in the service of God, it was but fitting that he should have a partner whose face was also set Zionwards, that they might assist each other on their pilgrimage; and Providence ordained that he should be

united to one of the most pure-minded and holy women that ever adorned the church of Christ on earth. 'It was at Ashbourne that Seth Evans first heard Elizabeth preach, and after that they appear to have often met each other in various parts of the country at religious gatherings. They were married at St. Mary's church, Nottingham. Samuel lived longer than his brother. We are told that a great attachment existed between the two brothers, although they differed in their views on religious matters. 'When in partnership they were prosperous; and it is not too much to assume that the business capacity of the elder brother was superior to that of Seth, who was too yielding and too confiding to be intrusted with the affairs of this world.' The history tells us that a few days before his death Seth sent for the carpenter, and gave full directions respecting his coffin; and having made an exact calculation by measurement as to the most convenient means of moving it in and out, they were carefully noted down, and handed over to the undertaker for his guidance. Samuel Evans died in the eighty-second year of his age.

Elizabeth Evans, like Dinah Morris in the story, was a Methodist preacher, and lived and laboured among the Derbyshire hills more than half a century ago—near 'Arkwright's mills there at Cromford,' as we have it in 'Adam Bede.' She is as fit for a fine novel as is Livingstone for a grand epic. In reading the story, it is difficult to believe that a woman as good as Dinah ever lived; but Elizabeth Evans lived, and her life is as beautiful as that of Dinah. She preached in barns and outhouses, and on village greens before cottages. She was a pure-hearted woman, of poor parents. She lived at Wirks-

worth, and carried the Gospel to the peasantry of the surrounding villages. When she was 'called' to the work she was a beautiful young woman. She had a loving face and soft grey eyes. Her simplicity won the sympathy of hearers before she spoke, and disarmed the coarse incivility of country clowns. She stood up in the name of Methodism, but it did not mean the same thing then as it does now. It was not of that modern type which 'reads quarterly reviews and attends in chapels and pillared porticoes, but of a very old-fashioned kind. They believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard, having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators; and it is impossible for me to represent their diction as correct, or their instruction as liberal. Still—I if I have read religious history aright—faith, hope, and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with a sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank heaven! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings.' In her broad teaching of love, and charity, and truth, Elizabeth Evans was far beyond the limits of a sect. In her spiritual faith she reminds us now and then of Joan of Arc. Elizabeth toiled among 'Nature's unambitious underwood,' and lived a life that was a poem. Her fight was the fight of Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' She obeyed her conscience and worked for the good of others.

In the novel the descriptions of Dinah are descriptive also of Elizabeth. The heroine of fact and the heroine of fiction are

alike in walking, talking, dress, occupation, and the fortunes of life. Each wore a Quaker's bonnet, and lived and died in the Derbyshire hills. Dinah preached on Hayslope Green—Elizabeth preached on Roston Green.

A beautiful prayer, preserved as having been uttered by Elizabeth, is put into the mouth of Dinah. We all remember how Dinah stayed in prison with Hetty Sorrel, who had been condemned to death for the murder of her child, and how Hetty was released from death. Elizabeth Evans also stayed in prison with a young woman who had been condemned to death for the murder of her child. In the latter instance, however, the condemned woman was executed, and Elizabeth was with her to the last. And we all remember the two brothers, Adam Bede and Seth, carpenters, and that one became the husband of Dinah. Elizabeth Evans knew two such brothers, carpenters, and she became the wife of one of them.

The following sketch of the life of Elizabeth Evans is abridged from an account of her religious experiences, written by her own hand, with additions made by a Methodist preacher who accompanied her in many of her journeys on circuit. She did not keep a diary, and we must depend on the information of those who knew her. We may be sure they would not state anything untrue of her.

The autobiography begins:—

"For a long time I have felt it my duty to write a short account of my unprofitable life, but it is with great difficulty that I make a beginning. However, in the fear of the Lord, and, I trust, with an eye to His glory, I at last submit to take up my pen.

"I was born at Newbold, in Leicestershire, in the year of our Lord 1776. My dear mother died before I was twelve years old. She lived to God according to

the light she had, and always believed she must know her sins forgiven before her death. On the morning she died, a cousin of my father felt a strong conviction to visit my mother. He was in the Methodist connexion. He set out with all speed, and when he arrived at my father's house he found my mother as he thought dying. He spoke to her concerning her soul. She opened her eyes, and said, "The Lord Jesus Christ has sent you hither." She immediately found what she had been so long seeking, and almost instantly expired.

'My father professed himself a Churchman, and for many years expected to be saved by the works of the law. He used to instruct us to fear God and be honest. He could not bear the name of dishonesty or anything that was dishonourable, but he knew very little of Gospel faith or the plan of salvation, until it pleased the Lord, in mercy, to afflict him with a paralytic stroke, which confined him to his house for nearly two years. Meanwhile our dear friends visited him very much, and I have reason to believe that he became soundly converted to God. His last and most earnest request was to be buried in the Methodist burying-ground. Prior to this, meetings were held in his own house a year and a half. He was buried in the Griffy Dam Chapel-yard, in the Ashby Circuit.'

'But I must, as I proposed, give some account of the dealings of God with my own soul. What I have suffered through the loss of my dear mother can only be explained in eternity; but the Lord's ways are in the whirlwind, and "what we know not now we shall know hereafter."

'Elizabeth's mother left four children—two boys and two girls. Elizabeth was the youngest daughter. Her father took a second wife, and the step-mother used the children with great cruelty. In consequence of ill-usage Elizabeth wandered from home, and after a long search she was found under a haystack by her father.

'I believe the Lord directed me to leave my father's house when I was little more than fourteen years old. I lived at Derby for about seven years, with a family that knew very little more about religion than myself. We had plenty of prayer-books and saying of prayers, but very little heart-felt religion. Previous to this time, when I was about seven years of age, the Lord blessed me with a little light concerning the nature of preaching. I saw that reading was not preaching. I could read a sermon, and yet I could not preach, and I thought that to read it over like a schoolboy was

not the way that God intended His gospel should be preached.'

We hope this thought occurs to many of our modern clergymen. They have too much to do with matters of form, and they give but little evidence, as a rule, of enthusiasm in their clerical occupation. Many men become clergymen for positions in society. 'What right have such men to represent Christianity,' as Mary Garth says in 'Middlemarch,' 'as if it were an institution for getting up idiots genteelly?'

'I was powerfully impressed with a sense of the shortness of time, and the awful consequences of dying in sin, from the sermons preached in the Methodist chapel. The texts were, "In hell he lifted up his eyes," and "Here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come."'

This must have been in the old preaching-place, near the All Saints' Church, Wirksworth. The King Street Chapel was not then built. There is an alley, called Amen Alley, on the opposite side of the church. It is not difficult to understand why it was so named. It is pointed out as the place where the old Methodists used to preach.

'The conviction never wore off to the day of my conversion to God. At this time I was very young. The Lord continued to strive with me, and to keep me from falling into many grievous sins. I used to say many prayers and strictly examine myself by the law of Moses every night. I always felt condemned from these words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." I saw that he who offendeth on one point is guilty of all. These words were most powerfully impressed on my mind: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." What to do I knew not. I wept and prayed and longed to find the living way, though I was lost and confused, and dark and blind. Oh! how I longed for instruction! But I had no one to take me by the hand, or I believe at that time I should have been brought to a knowledge of the truth.



Oh! how I prayed the publican's prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner." I had some quaint views of Christ coming into the world to save sinners, but how was I to be saved by Him I could not tell. I wandered in the dark, sinning and repenting for a long time.

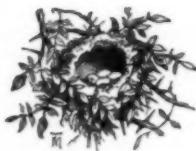
"I removed to Nottingham, but had not the privilege of going to the meetings. I loved the Methodists, and always believed that if ever I was religious I should be one; but I had no acquaintance with any of them until I was more than twenty years of age. The tears I have shed on this account are known only to the Lord. I had now left service and was at liberty to serve God, but I reasoned for a few weeks with the enemy of my soul. I thought I never was happy, but I would be if possible. I sometimes went to the giddy dance, sometimes to card-playing, shameful to tell, after such repeated convictions for sin; but I could not find what I sought for, viz., happiness. I only grew more and more miserable until Easter Tuesday, which, I believe, was April 18th, 1797.

"The Rev. George Smith had just returned from Newfoundland. He preached in the Back Barn, and our people were turned out of their chapel through Mr. Kilham's division."

This was Ockley Chapel. There was no other in the place at that time.

"The preacher took for his text, "Who art thou, great mountain?" There was a great work among the people. Many were crying out for mercy; and the Lord's people were very earnestly engaged in prayer, and often broke out in singing "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." I saw no confusion in the matter. I concluded that sinners were repenting of their sins, as I ought to do. And the people of God were, so anxious for them to be saved; and these things caused them to rejoice. I longed for repentance more than I did for anything in my life, but I felt great hardness of heart. But while I was looking to Christ the mighty power of God fell upon me in an instant. I fell to the ground like one dead. I believe I lost my senses for a season; but when I recovered the dear friends were praying with me, and I was weeping most bitterly. It pleased the Lord in about two hours to speak peace to my soul. I arose from my knees, and praised God for that opportunity."

(To be continued.)



## RAPE OF THE GAMP.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### SOMETHING WRONG.

FIVE years have passed since the confession which Mr. Lane made to his friend on the first day of January, 185-. Shortly after that interesting incident Mr. Lane, under the auspices of Dr. Phelps, entered himself at the college in Oxford of which his friend was an ornament. There he resided for the space of about four years, strove the academical strife, and at length graduated there, although no such name as that of Lane had been registered on the college boards. In short, Mr. Lane had ceased to exist, and Bedford Lyte (*in propria persona*) had resumed the battle of life.

Of the sixth year one month is gone after those sixty months, and another moon is on the wane. The English clipper ship 'Adriatic,' of 3000 tons burden, is homeward-bound, with a strong northerly wind on her larboard quarter, with yards well braced, and every available square foot of canvas drawing its utmost. A magnified ideal racer, she rushes forward, showing speed and strength at every stride, as she reaches superbly from wave to wave, and tosses aside their watery crests, which glitter about her bows in never-ending rainbows.

One little circumstance is noticed by the solitary passenger who paces her clean poop deck. To this we shall presently have occasion to refer. He is not a seaman by profession, but having an artist's eye for the hull and rigging of a ship, and that mysterious sympathy for power which always exists in a strong man, he has wandered up and down the

numerous wharves of New York, and strayed among her forests of masts without experiencing a more hearty glow of admiration for any vessel than for the one whose deck he now patrols.

The intention of this passenger was to cross in the 'Aspasia,' a large mail steamboat which sailed a day or two before the 'Adriatic.' But it so happened that a mal-adroit little bird, an old and familiar companion, had escaped from the window of his hotel, and no consideration would induce him to abandon it. No sooner had the 'Aspasia' sailed than the truant (after apparently innumerable futile attempts) discovered its master's open window, and calmly returned to its allegiance. When we record the bird's name as 'Thomas,' it will not be necessary to state that the single passenger on board the 'Adriatic' was Bedford Lyte.

'We may be a week longer,' he murmured to himself, pacing the narrow deck, 'but I doubt if we shall. I should like to sail on a clean ship which beat a dirty steamer. No Cunard or Collins could pass us at this rate. Thirteen knots the mate gave by the last reckoning; but we have been making far more than that for the last thirty-six hours, according to our longitude. Let me see: thirteen knots are just fifteen statute miles. They could hardly beat that. I know the mail steamboat I went to Vera Cruz in could not.'

The passenger, though no sailor, was a fair mathematician and navigator, and Captain McLeod,

of the 'Adriatic,' was anything but averse to compare his longitude with that of his passenger after their noontide observations.

Again the passenger struggled with some troublesome compunctions which suggested that steamers cross the Atlantic in shorter time than sailing vessels. 'She has waited five years for me, and won't throw me over for five days now,' he muttered, not quite with a tone of conviction, for a letter which seemed to burn in the breast pocket of his pilot coat implied that, whatever the perils of the deep might be, at least equal dangers beset his absence from the coasts of Albion. 'It is trying her too severely,' he continued, tramping up and down the windward side of the deck with such creaking, angry sea-boots that the second mate, vainly trying to sleep below, mentally consigned him to the tender mercies of David Jones — 'trying her too severely. I always was a brute. I have always hit my hardest where another man would touch most softly. I ought to have abandoned Tommy and taken the "Aspasia." It was madness to risk losing her for a tomtit.'

Finding no outlet for his angry impatience in any possible action, the strong man became rigidly statuesque, and perambulated the small space with fierce though silent energy, a moving petrification.

The wind freshened, still blowing from the north. It was the first mate's watch, and at six bells (3 P.M.) he came on the poop and gave orders for shortening sail.

'How do you like the blasts of Boreas, Mr. Lux?' he facetiously observed, and furled the top-gallant sails, the mainsail, and the jib, reefed the top-sails, and so made the ship 'snug,' as he called it, under reefed top-sails, a fore-

sail, and a foretop-mast stay-sail.

'But she'll have to be *snuggerer* yet afore long, or I'm a Dutchman,' cynically observed the third mate, who was steering the ship, being the only man on board who could do it singly.

Poor Bedford was so bewildered by the mate's dark classical allusions, and the relative merits of 'snug' and 'snuggerer,' that his attention was partially distracted from his proper woe and fixed upon the dangers of the deep.

The helmsman, who evidently had no sinecure, though he handled the huge wheel with a masterly touch, and was provided with a possible ally in the person of a sailor who shambled about to leeward, regarded the passenger with less contempt than the sons of Neptune generally bestow on 'land-lubbers.' He was Lyte's equal in size and strength, though decidedly not his superior in grace. Older than the captain, and probably a better seaman than any on board, he ranked little higher than a mere 'able seaman' in the ocean hierarchy. Perhaps as he stood there, not by any means neglecting his duty, but unavoidably looking at the man who passed and repassed him so often in his stern and restless patrol, he saw in his face and mien some indication of the struggle within him, and remembered in his own rude career some hour when his mind had been torn with a conflict of fear, doubt, or self-reproach to which the perils of his vocation were as mere daily chances. Whether from previous observation or some such present reflection, he now looked at the passenger with a keen interest. The latter returned the look, and gradually entertained a hearty respect for a man of such evident power and gallant bearing.

'How is it you are alone at the wheel in such a heavy sea?' he asked, observing the manifest labour of his position.

Solemnly expectorating behind the wheel, as if he had intended to deliver an oration, Mr. Crays jerked his head towards the amphibious person to leeward, and then, with something between a wink and a blink, devoted his powers exclusively to the compass and the helm. At this moment another sailor brought the binnacle lamp, already lighted, and placed it in its position; but Lyte noticed that Crays scarcely saw him, steering on solemnly, and considering the access of a lamp to the compass no more than we notice the rising or glimmering of a star at night.

Perhaps a little piqued at the man's reticence, Lyte stood and looked at the compass for a minute by the new light of the binnacle lamp, then at Mr. Crays, observing the effort which his control of the wheel cost him, and then said, 'Why is she so heavy in hand?'

The helmsman cocked his eye, shifted the plug of tobacco in his mouth, and looked knowing, but tacitly declined to converse.

Rather pleased now and amused at his persistence, Lyte was withdrawing by the companion ladder, when the amphibious one shuffled up to him, and with a scrape remarked, 'Muster Crays ee wunt spee-uk at t' wheel.' Then he shuffled away again, and the passenger retired, wondering whether the apologist came from Somerset, Dorset, or Devonshire. Thus even the current of events at sea will serve to distract a lover's reverie.

At eight bells, that is at 4 o'clock p.m., as the sun was sinking toward the horizon behind the good ship 'Adriatic' in a great blaze of crimson cloud, Mr. Lyte requested the steward's boy (a

coloured man about fifty years of age) to ask Mr. Crays to step into his cabin, which that mariner shortly did.

'You see, I am anxious, Mr. Crays,' said the passenger to his guest. The reader will understand that the third mate had no quarters among the gods in this part of the ship. Mr. Lyte continued: 'I asked you why she was so heavy in hand. I am no seaman, but—will you oblige me by taking a nip with me?' Whereupon Mr. Crays took his noggin of rum like a man, and Mr. Lyte took another, each blinking at the other in true nautical style. 'But, as I was saying, you were too busy to answer me. Now why does not the ship answer the helm more easily? I am terribly anxious to be at home.'

'You see, sir,' the third mate replied, 'she be a sight too deep in the water.'

So speaking, and wiping his mouth with the back of his brawny hand, the mariner bowed and withdrew.

'Another west-country man,' said Mr. Lyte to himself, having obtained little further information except a confirmation of his own opinion. But pursuing Mr. Crays to the main-deck, and finding him hesitating about a favourable moment for making the rush forward, he urged the question. 'Is there anything wrong with her?' he asked.

'Best ship out of London dock,' was the curt answer.

'Anything wrong with her cargo?' the passenger persisted.

'Good enough, for that matter,' replied Mr. Crays, 'but rather too much of it. Wheat in bulk, you know.' Then, as the water rushed out at the lee scuppers, he made his advance gallantly, and was soused from head to foot with the crest of an ill-disposed wave which

took that opportunity of dashing over the bulwarks.

'Poor old devil!' the passenger calmly observed, rather enjoying the immersion of his taciturn friend.

Mr. Lyte was the only passenger on board the 'Adriatic.' After completing his university course at Oxford, he had accepted an engagement to Mexico as correspondent of a London review, and was returning to England by way of New York. The delicacy which prevents a passenger in every instance from asking impertinent questions about the ship to which he has intrusted his life and his personalty, was in this case doubled by the fact that his passage was a gratuitous act of courtesy extended to him by a mercantile firm (agents of the London owners) whose acquaintance he had made during his brief stay in the Island City.

The circumstance which had attracted his notice before Mr. Crays' reluctant admission was the extraordinary depth of the ship in the water. Even in the smooth sea through which they had sped their way for the first few days, the water had continually gurgled in at the scuppers on one side, and out at the scuppers on the other side, washing across the main-deck in a manner more conducive to cleanliness than security. Latterly they had enjoyed a strong leading wind, with only a moderately heavy sea, and though the ship leaned over to leeward much less than Lyte's previous experience had led him to anticipate, yet now and again the summit of a wave curled over her bulwarks and flooded the decks from poop to fore-castle. The poop and fore-castle decks were so lofty that they remained comparatively dry. But even a landsman could see at a glance that a vessel encoun-

tering only moderate weather ought not to be half under water. And certain angry murmurs of the crew, to which it was impossible to remain deaf, had aggravated Lyte's suspicions of *something wrong*.

Already he had ventured on a faint and delicate hint to Captain M'Leod, who had received and hitherto uniformly treated him in the friendly spirit suggested by the very terms of his passage. The captain's testy answer to that hint had absolutely convinced him of impending danger. It was clear to an unprejudiced observer that the captain, being a fifth-part owner of ship and cargo, was reluctant to admit the overlading of his vessel, and yet was perceptibly annoyed at the avaricious policy which had overridden his judgment and sent him to sea in charge of an enterprise involving so much property and so many lives beyond his own.

With regard to the particular advantages or disadvantages of 'wheat in bulk' as a cargo, Mr. Lyte had hitherto obtained no experience, and the etiquette of his position rendered the asking of any questions a delicate matter. Mr. Crays' reticence, added to the captain's manifest testiness, made it clear that his duty to himself and all concerned now imposed silence upon him. Why 'wheat in bulk,' that is, in one undivided mass, in the hold of a sound, strong ship, should be more dangerous than wheat in sacks, he was at a loss to apprehend. Above the hold, or 'between-decks,' there was, as it seemed to him, a whole cargo of quite another character. This consisted entirely of American clocks, packed two dozen in a case, and also some heavier cases containing sewing-machines. This upper cargo occupied the region inhabited by passengers in an emigrant

ship, and had been stowed while Mr. Lyte was putting his effects on board and making his little arrangements for the voyage. The freight both on wheat and machinery was so high, and space so valuable, that no ship's stores, and no water except in the iron tank forward, had been placed below. The main-deck under the bulwarks was lined with double rows of casks of fresh water and barrels of provisions firmly lashed together, and, as it seemed to the passenger, impregnable to the assaults of wind or wave. The poop deck, however, and the fore-castle, though separated by the entire length of quarter and main decks, like two islands with an angry sea between, were free both of waves and artificial incumbrances. In a word, the good ship 'Adriatic,' from mast-head to keel, was one to cause the breast of a landsman to glow with admiration; and despite her rigidity and unseemly depth in the water, Mr. Lyte would have constantly and sincerely thanked the Messrs Dearborn for giving him this passage, had it not been for a tiresome letter which kindled agony in his breast.

After clear and bright weather, with a fair or leading wind from Sandy Hook, they had encountered fogs off the Newfoundland Banks, and were as yet hardly clear of these dubious shallows. At eight o'clock in the morning, however cold it might be, the passenger used to emerge from the cuddy door, and have a dozen buckets of sea-water pitched over him from the poop deck above. This, far from being irksome labour, was a bit of fun for the sailors while washing decks. With the help of an occasional chat with Captain M'Leod and the mate, and his observation and calculations at noon, and his perusal of some novels

purchased of Messrs. Harper before leaving New York, he managed to pass the short wintry days, and at night would lean over the taffrail, smoking his old wooden pipe, and fondling that quaint tomtit, which had become so familiar with his irregular hours as to roost indifferently by night or day. To his astonishment, one evening as he leaned over the lee rail, a hand heavy as his own was laid on his shoulder. He knew that M'Leod was pacing the deck to windward; but they had not been overfriendly since his inconsiderate question.

'Mr. Lyte,' said the captain generously, 'you thought me a bit crabbed with you, the day before yesterday, when you asked me a question. So I was. A man don't like to be catechised in that way.'

'I most sincerely apologize, captain. The truth is, I am such a land-lubber that I don't know how to behave as a gentleman on board ship.'

'Stow that, Mr. Lyte,' the captain replied. 'It strikes me you won't act otherwise than gentleman-like at sea or on land. I may not be exactly a gentleman myself, but I know one when I come across him, and —'

'Pray stow that, captain,' Lyte broke in; 'you surely cannot take me for a sham swell! I work for my living almost as hard as you do, and never hope to travel with a better gentleman than you are.'

'I know something about you from Messrs. Dearborn,' M'Leod rejoined; 'and my own wife's brother is a fellow of one of those colleges, though not half the man you are. I ought not to have cut up rough with you the other day. I can remember many a time asking my brother-in-law questions about his colleges and colleagues, and thinking him a very little-



unminded man for seeming a bit impatient with me because I pushed him with questions on what was A B C to him, but Greek to me. The truth is, I'm rather put out with this overlading of the ship. It was done against my judgment, and ain't doing justice to me nor the ship.'

'I take what you say as a generous expression of good-will and confidence,' said Lyte; 'and if you have an opportunity of putting it to proof, I hope you'll find me worthy of it.'

'Well, Mr. Lyte, there's no saying what may happen,' the captain replied, somewhat moodily; and then repeated, 'there's no saying what may happen. Things don't look so ship-shape as I could wish. But I have a rare good ship's company. The three mates, boat-swain, carpenter, two boys, and four able seamen have stuck by me for these ten or twelve voyages.' Then, turning sharply on the passenger, and betraying a remarkable mixture of resolution and hesitation in his keen black eyes, M'Leod suddenly asked, 'Do you hear them growling at all?'

For a few moments Lyte hesitated, with downcast eyes, and probably those few moments were sufficient to convey an unspoken affirmative to the skipper's ready apprehension. But still he waited as if for an answer, to prove his man; and Lyte said, meeting his eyes calmly and firmly, 'I don't walk about your deck eavesdropping, Mr. M'Leod; but I don't mind saying that since I have seen how deep the ship is in the water, and how stubborn to her helm, I have regretted being your guest, for I have an object in reaching home.'

'So have I, Lyte,' said the honest seaman, again laying the heavy hand on his shoulder. 'I have a wife and a little girl on the coast of Sussex, and I should

be loth to leave them for good and all. Come down to my cabin and have a quiet glass with me.'

And down the two veterans, the sturdy sailor and no less sturdy landsman, went. Before they parted that night the latter understood something about 'wheat in bulk' and its disadvantages, or, rather, the disadvantages of those who carried it beneath their feet as cargo. Unlike wheat in sacks, which retained its position however the ship might lurch, 'wheat in bulk' was apt to shift to starboard or to larboard in some sudden lurch, when its own mass and weight would force it to maintain that new level, so hostile to the well-being of the vessel in which it lay, like an imperfectly digested repast in the abdomen of a suffering giant. But if the vessel should admit an insidious rivulet of water through one of its thousand seams, this horrible mass would swell and swell, still refusing to move, but distending its awful bulk until the sides of the doomed ship (forced open from within) gaped wider and wider to receive the all-devouring ocean. Mr. Lyte had also learned why American clocks should be placed between-decks instead of in the hold, and how it was that an officer who was part owner of the ship he commanded was unable to control the tonnage of her cargo. But beyond and even below these mysteries he reluctantly discovered that his honest captain was a secret devotee of Bacchus.

At midnight, when the watches changed, M'Leod went on deck for a few minutes to leave his orders with the officer of the watch, and Mr. Lyte ran the gauntlet of the scudding spray which swept the main-deck, making his way forward to smoke his last pipe on the forecastle with the

man 'on the look-out.' A certain delicacy of feeling prevented him from even allowing further conversation on the subject of their common danger; and when the genuine British growler manifested itself in his companion, Mr. Lyte cut him short, saying, 'You ought to have protested before she sailed if you saw anything wrong. The best thing to be done now is for us all to pull together, and if anything *does* go wrong, to pull it right again.' 'Old Blowhard,' as this look-out man was denominated, stared at his companion in the dim moonlight with a puzzled wonder, until, as they approached the after limit of the fore-castle in their short promenade, a heavy sea struck the ship on her weather quarter, shaking her from stem to stern, and a considerable portion of the crest lashed both their faces with its briny scourge, blinding them to everything except the necessity of self-preservation, which they immediately recognised by clutching hold of the nearest rope and crouching till the shock had subsided.

'And I should like to know what *you call that!*' retorted Mr. Blowhard, as if Lyte had previously been naming all the animals in Noah's ark.

'You have more experience of foul weather than I have. What do *you* call it?' asked the landsman.

'Foul weather and *foul play!* Them's what I call it. And d—d bad steerin' too, gettin' her into the trough of the sea like that.'

'I could have told that Mr. Crays was not at the wheel myself; but what *do* you mean by "foul play"? We're all on board the same ship.'

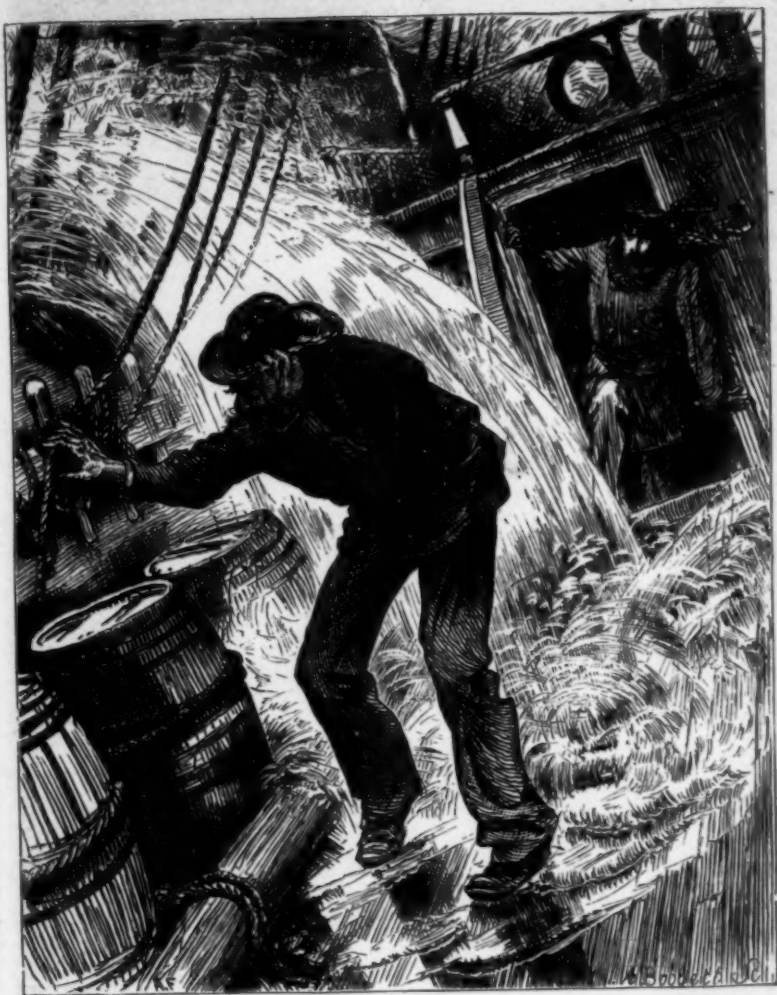
'But the *howners ain't,*' bel-lowed Mr. Blowhard. 'They gammons a man into signing articles for the return voyage, and then

loads her down to the water's edge to come home in Febru-airy across the o-sean.'

'But the captain's on board,' the passenger mildly remonstrated.

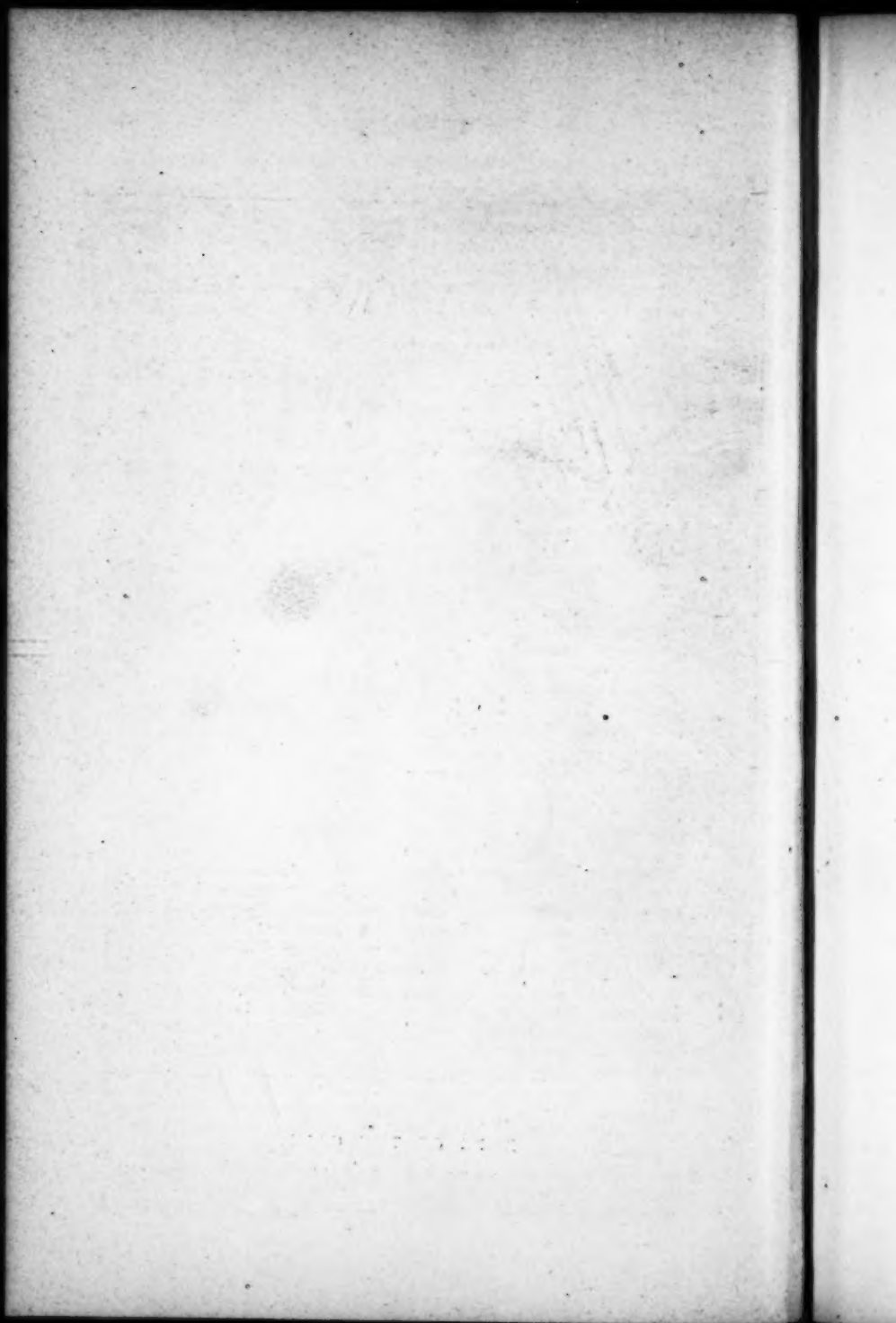
'I didn't say as he warn't,' savagely retorted the mariner. 'Though he is a fifth-part howner. The ship's insured. The cargo's insured. *He's* insured. And what's more, he luses within a hinch!' By which latter laconic form of words the seaman merely expressed his recognition of the dismal fact which Mr. Lyte had already been constrained to admit. So they parted in melancholy concord, and with mutual respect.

The 'Adriatic' being on the port or larboard tack, Mr. Lyte's cabin being on the larboard side of the ship, and his berth on the same side of his cabin, he was liable literally to tumble out of bed if the ship should lean over-much to leeward, or particularly if she should lurch suddenly in that direction, especially as the steward in his hospitable zeal had accommodated the guest with two thick mattresses, thus raising his recumbent body almost to a level with the summit of his bed-board. As yet, however, the ship, with a strong breeze, rising at times to half a gale, abeam, *i.e.*, at right angles to her course, had sped majestically on her way, deviating from the vertical and horizontal lines but little until this evening. The mercury, however, had been going steadily down for twelve hours or more; and though the pale moon was doing her best to illuminate the shroud of mist which hung over the sea, other indications of a coming storm were not wanting to an observant eye. 'Tuck yourself in tight; you'll have a bit of a roll before morning, if I'm not mistaken,' the captain had said



RAPE OF THE CAMP.

'The third mate of the "Adriatic."'



to him when they parted. But Bedford Lyte was accustomed to inconvenience, and only thought about storms and tempests as the possible means of delaying his arrival at an English port. If only the gale were favourable, it might blow, so far as he cared, until their balance of life or death should hang poised in the crest of every billow, so long as they could only run before it, fly before it, outstrip the fastest mail steamer, and distance the very sea-birds in their flight. The only thing he dreaded was heaving-to and consequent delay.

The landaman had tucked himself tightly in, and was by the exercise of a strong effort gradually falling into the arms of Morpheus, when he suddenly became conscious of a very different fall. However it may have happened, he was involved, head foremost, like a netted lion, among the legs and lashings of the long cuddly table, and the door of his own cabin was playing a tattoo on the calves of his legs, which protruded across the space between the table and the bulk-head.

Crawling back again ignominiously to his retreat, and relighting his swinging lamp, Mr. Lyte took Frank Browne's last letter from the pocket of his pilot coat, and spent a restless hour in reading it and poring over its contents. Fool that he was not to have left America two days before by the 'Aspasia,' that fast mail boat which always accomplished the voyage in twelve days, sometimes in ten!

The letter certainly contained much to distress him; and now that he came to look at it calmly, as he said to himself, but really less calmly than before, he was amazed at the frivolity which had beset him in New York, and had induced him to let the 'Aspasia'

sail without him. Then his eye turned to the innocent cause of that delay with anger: perhaps the first time he had so looked upon it during all those years. And now the age and infirmity, the unwavering fidelity and constant love, of the little creature disarmed his wrath, as it stood roosting on one leg in its ridiculous manner, with head under its wing, like a ball of fluff, on the rail which supported the curtain of his berth.

'Poor little Tom!' he exclaimed, relenting. 'True friend and faithful companion! And never played me a trick before in all my wanderings. He is getting old and stupid; and the multitudes of the windows, all so exactly alike, in the hotel, confused him. No doubt he flew to a hundred wrong ones in succession, and found them shut, or saw strange faces within, and went back disconsolately to those bleak skeletons of trees, where he would have died if I had left him. Perhaps the climate of Mexico has affected his brain. Never mind, Tommy!

"You and I are old;  
Old age hath yet his honour and his toll;  
Death closes all."

Remarkable and almost superstitious as his trust in the bird's preternatural instincts had hitherto been, it did not once occur to him now that any benefit should accrue to him from having missed the steam-ship and sailed in this half-doomed 'Adriatic.' On the contrary, each time he read and re-read Frank's letter, he regretted the delay more and more, and cursed his own carelessness for letting the bird fly out of window in the midst of a crowded city, and from such a difficult window to distinguish among others.

But before looking over the distressed passenger's shoulder and

reading his letter, we must flit to other scenes and incidents of an earlier date.

## CHAPTER XXII.

HIM! WHY, HIM!

For a long time past there had no longer been any unpleasantness between the Brownes of Pedlington and Bedford Lyte, as the possessor of that once-hated name. To tell how this happy reconciliation came about is our present office. That epileptic attack which broke down the resistance of the sturdy old lawyer on a certain Christmas Day some five years ago was followed by a terrible prostration, which at first affected, or seemed to affect, mind and body. The doctors (and we may be sure that plenty of these learned wights attended his temporary couch in Dover) were decidedly of opinion that this was likely to result either in a very alarming crisis, or in an ultimate tendency to yield to a very judicious and energetic treatment extending over a period of twelve or eighteen months. A tremendous gun of the largest calibre was telegraphed for. He came from the metropolis, and was, Frank declared, only distinguishable from the Pedlington and Dover authorities by the superior ticking of his pocket chronometer, which was furnished with a complete system of second hands, and fingers indicating fractions of seconds. After a profound and costly consultation, these magicians declined to state which of the above results would supervene, or how soon, or even whether either of these results, or anything else, would certainly ensue. But the doctor with the great watch and the fabulous fee hinted to Frank that he would be unwise

to neglect any little documentary arrangements (usual in such cases) while the patient retained some use of his mental faculties and right arm.

Thereupon all the Brownes were summoned, by telegraph and otherwise, and, as the custom of their family is when any member of it is about to die, assembled from the four corners of the county, from the hills of Surrey and the downs of Sussex. They came from Pedlington, from Brownleigh, from Farfield, from Tiddenden and Benterden and the remoter regions, until every bedroom in the old Castle Hotel at Dover was engaged for a Mr. Browne. The reader will understand that these good old-fashioned Tory families still patronise 'The Castle.' The new and meretricious 'Lord Warden Hotel' is for your travelling Americans, Russians, and Frenchmen, or mere English waifs and strays.

So about a baker's dozen of far-off cousins, including Uncle Robert, the head of the family, from Brownleigh, sat down lugubriously to greasy mutton-chops and damp potatoes at the common table in the frowsy old respectable coffee-room. I say lugubriously, although a grim hilarity usually prevails on these occasions, because a deadly feud existed and almost raged between every member of this affectionate group. Robert Browne, Esq., of Brownleigh, had especially infuriated each one of his connections and relatives, remote or near, by charging his estate in order to bestow upon that insidious warrior, Robert Browne, junior, a lieutenant and adjutant in her Majesty's —th Regiment of Infantry, an annuity of 200*l.* per annum. One Mr. Browne, a lawyer from Tiddenden, devoured all his smoky mutton without salt because the waiter had placed the salt-cellar

near and  
the Rev.  
terden.



would  
pened  
all da  
more



near an obnoxious young clergyman, the Rev. Timothy Browne, from Benterden. Not even about the weather

of them severally, made two or three feeble attempts to kindle a glimmer of intercourse on this pleasing topic. The



would they converse, although it happened to be execrable, and they were all damp; and the waiter, who was more or less acquainted with each one

ferocious dignity with which the youthful ecclesiastic said his 'grace before meat,' alone, and standing with folded palms, seeing that all the others fell to

unceremoniously (which they only did to annoy him, each being accustomed on other occasions to the same ceremony), was a study worthy of Hogarth.

After this dismal repast they each went in turn, glided into the dark chamber, stared at their dying relative, took up his unresisting hand, held it for a moment, then dropped it like a hot potato, and shuffled out of the room with an awkward and guilty aspect, as if each one had surreptitiously pocketed a silver spoon. It had been stipulated by Mrs. Browne beforehand that not a word should be spoken. He was not strong enough to bear it, she said; the fact being that he had quarrelled with every one of them except Uncle Robert, to whom alone he now gave his blessing, calling him a 'dear fellow.' The honest elder brother shed a tear as he dropped the hand, but none the less looked guilty and uneasy as he left the audience chamber. One exception to the general behaviour shone out in the case of the young clergyman. Long-coated, severe-cravatted, smug, prim, sleek, and carrying a book with a gilt cross upon it, he commenced a pious address to his dying uncle.

'Take him away,' gently observed the invalid, turning to the wall. 'Take him away. I never could bear the sight of him.'

And Mrs. Browne led him out, dimly conscious that he was alluding to pearls and a quadruped not famous for cleanliness or gratitude.

These were Walter Browne's funeral obsequies. Yet it is only fair to add that not one of these gentlemen expected a shilling from him. Amiable and affectionate each in his own household, it was the habit of the family to quarrel among its remoter members during life, and at the portal of death to

draw a veil mournfully over the preceding disagreement.

The good man had long ago made up his mind as to the disposition of his worldly affairs. As every wise man does, he made his last will and testament when sound in body and clear in brain. So strongly did he feel this duty that not even the severe calamity which had befallen Blanche would induce him to meddle with a will once made. No codicils for him, or Chancery suits for his family. Let Blanche live with her mother. Let Frank save a remnant of her fortune if possible. If not, let it be. By no means let Frank prosecute that scoundrel George Baily. His sin would find him out; and probably Blanche would forgive him in the end, if the man had ever loved her at all, or she him. These were some of Mr. Browne's funeral observations. But not all.

Calling the family whose acquaintance we have made in their native town round his bedside, he said: 'There is one reparation I would make before I leave a world of blunders, of lies, of trust and distrust alike misplaced. I wish every member of my own family now present to join in this solemn act of justice.'

Janet here crept to his side, knelt down, and seized his pale hand. Mrs. Browne, who was sitting there, made way for her, still bending over her child and her husband's hand.

'A noble young man,' Mr. Browne went on, 'has been calumniated to us by one whom I would speak of more severely if Blanche had not already suffered unjustly. Bedford Lyte, whose name I forbade in my house for twelve years, was utterly misrepresented to us, he and his conduct, by George Baily.'

How Janet squeezed and kissed that pale hand, and how Frank's and Albert's eyebrows went up

and up, for neither of the young men knew yet who Mr. Lane was.

Mr. Browne continued: 'I have, thank God, been able to sift the matter before I die. Your mother has in her deak Lady Balbry's written admission that her son, Sir Thomas, ruined that poor girl who visited us once, and whom Captain Lyte allowed us to call Eleanor Baily—for shame to his memory!'

Now Albert's forehead threatened entirely to disappear, so high did his scanty eyebrows ascend to his glossy poll.

'She was,' resumed the sick man, 'a prenuptial child of poor Mrs. Baily.'

If he had said *Poluphloisbio Thallas*, Janet would have had quite as distinct an apprehension of his meaning. All she knew or cared to know (and it was already only intuitively known) was that her lover was going to be justified.

'Bedford Lyte, poor fellow,' Mr. Browne resumed, 'did actually kill Sir Thomas Balbry for ruining that girl. But in the meantime—do you understand me, Frank?—I say, between the baronet's villainy to the girl, and his being killed by Bedford Lyte, the young man had been most basely tricked, cozened, befooled, into marrying the girl himself.'

The stout old Briton fell back exhausted here; and though the great revelation had not come, a kind of prescience, or at least premonition of it, was breaking upon them all. Although Janet was no more enlightened than the rest, her behaviour seemed to lead to a true solution of the mystery. Mrs. Browne was in the secret, and, though trembling for her husband, was anxious to see this act of justice accomplished. She presented him with a wine-glassful of strong beef-tea, and then another of port wine, after which he resumed:

'If that wretched girl is living, I say with sorrow she is still his lawful wife.'

Here Albert, taking advantage of another pause induced by his father's weakness, solemnly interposed: 'Frank and Robert'—for the Marauder was there, but so depressed and subdued in the presence of this sorrow that all his vivacity was gone—'Frank and Robert, what did I say? *Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale?* And again, *I should be sorry to see any sister of mine as easy with gentlemen as Miss Baily was.* Now you see. Who was right?' But neither of his former antagonists cared now to enter into the lists with Albert.

Mr. Browne continued: 'This brave and generous though foolish youth has grown up a brave, generous, and foolish man. Less than a month ago George Baily, who when a mere lad had entered into this vile plot with his father, produced what they had secreted from the Captain, namely, a re-script of General Lyte's will, perfect and perfectly executed. He offered this to Bedford Lyte for a price. The young man chastised him in the presence of a servant, and destroyed this indisputable will, by which he knew himself his grandfather's heir, in the presence of three persons. By that act, Janet, my dear, this young man, in the flower of his youth, has lawfully given you of his own free-will that which Captain Lyte only gave you unlawfully on his death-bed. I objected to the first bequest. I always disliked Captain Lyte's will. This gift I cannot cavil at. The young man is very noble—very noble!'

Poor little Janet, still kneeling dejectedly at her father's bedside and holding his hand, in which from time to time she buried her

face, saw not whither all this mystery was tending. 'I always knew he must be a duck,' she sobbed—'a real duck! But, all the same, I shall give him back his fortune when I come of age!'

A faint smile again played over the dying man's face. He took his hand from hers, and laid it gently on the beautiful head nestling at his side, on which a furtive glimmer of sunshine played and reminded him of the glad old days of Pedlington.

Again speaking, with the light of that smile on his face, he said, 'You won't beat that man in generosity, my Janet; but come now quickly, for I am weary: *who do you think Mr. Lane is?*'

This question fell literally like a thunderbolt at the feet of all present. Doubtless mysterious combinations and coincidences had begun to direct their thoughts in the right groove. But not one present except his wife really knew or was prepared to divine the old man's secret. He looked round at them all with a more benignant and joyous smile than they remembered even in his day of health and strength. Only Albert had already suspected the truth, and then abandoned it in bewilderment.

'Hm!' cried Janet at last, defiant of Lindley Murray, and starting up with blushing cheeks and flashing sapphire eyes. 'Hm! Why, hm, of course!' Then she knelt down again, coaxing her father's poor pallid hand.

Mrs. Browne patted her comely, shapely head, decked with its masses of loose golden hair.

'Oh, the wicked Tulip!' Nelly softly exclaimed.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE LAST FEATHER.

THERE was much sweetness at that time to temper the bitter of Janet's trial; yet when we recollect that, though a just and honest man, utterly above fraud or chicanery, and steering his stubborn way as well as he knew how through the shoals of life, Mr. Browne had systematically indulged his daughters; and, while sneering at any enthusiastic occupation for girls, had encouraged them both with purse and countenance in mere pleasure-seeking of an innocent kind, it would be in the last degree unjust to expect on her part any matured powers of endurance or self-control. Puzzled now between Mr. Lane and Bedford Lyte, and having a profound respect for the man whom she knew as Mr. Lane, almost independently of her love for him, and quite independently of what she had recently learned of Bedford Lyte, she took refuge from her difficulty in calling her lover 'Sir.' This was all arranged, of course, in her secret council-chamber, and there adding together her reasons to respect the two men, to love the former (Mr. Lane), and to pity the latter (Bedford Lyte), she achieved a splendid feminine ideal, and called it 'Sir.' There was something grotesquely interesting about this innocent and lovely girl. Those of our readers who follow up this brief chronicle to its close will be perhaps more interested in her and in her fate at its end than during its earlier stages, and will wish to know somewhat of her married life. But before long we shall find her, yielding to her own ungovernable impulses, in imminent risk of never reaching the connubial epoch.

It was evident enough that 'Sir' had never loved any one but her. Having, as her most truthful father said, been tricked into marrying that wretched Eleanor, he could not now get rid of her. Janet well understood that a man of delicate feeling would not drag a woman from the seclusion of a cloister to undergo the exposure of a trial for divorce. 'Well,' she said to herself, 'I can wait. I love him. I adore him, my noble, my generous, brave Sir. And *he loves me*. He was dazzled by my beauty! Oh, how splendid! Who else *could* have said anything so exquisite? I could *die* when I think of it. Oh! oh!' These ecstasies, which would have been pretty acting if vented in public, were merely Janet's secret reveries.

But before long all the world was indignant with Walter Browne, Esquire, solicitor, of Pedlington; especially those gentlemen who had secured the reversions of the clerkships to the Justices of the Peace, to the Peddle Navigation Company, to the Turnpike Trust, to the County Lunatic Asylum, to the Peddlebourne Union, and to the Kent Conservative Superior Hop Cultivation Association, all of which Mr. Browne held, and continued to hold, though Death had knocked at his door with bony and importunate knuckles, and though (what was perhaps quite as important) Frank Browne had calmly stated that all the clerkships might go to—some obscure region—for him.

But his relations were even more infuriated, his far-off cousins, and remote step-uncles and nephews, who had eaten the dolorous mutton at Dover, 'the funeral-baked meats' of anticipation. After collecting round him all the paraphernalia of death, robing himself, as it were, in the pomp and panoply of coming dis-

solution, and actually giving a death-bed audience to his kith and kin, this old violator of conservative traditions had deliberately convalesced, and had gone back to his clerkships and emoluments at Pedlington just as if nothing had happened. Frank went so far as to inform Mr. Lyte, of Balliol College, Oxford, that a certain great London physician's watch had left off ticking, and was expected never to tick again, when its proprietor became aware of this recovery. Had Mr. Browne only remained deaf and dumb or blind (let us say), or imbecile and incapable, or paralytic in one side and a portion of the other, or given some such hostage to death and the doctors, his partial recovery would have been endurable. But for a man who had undertaken to give up the ghost to retain it in this surreptitious manner was contrary to the good old usages of conservative society. Thus a Tory, however staunch, may outlive his own reputation. Mr. Walter Browne, hitherto unimpeachable, was now a renegade from the Tory ranks of respectable death in the command of a Tory doctor. His cousin, the surgeon at Farfield, called him 'an old body-snatcher.' The severe ecclesiastic dubbed him 'a Lazarus.' And even his own most gentle and loving wife fancied that he had outwitted and made fools of a large and most respectable body of people. But Frank, to his infinite credit, laughed at this nonsense to scorn, made fun individually and collectively of the whole tribe, and showed that some petty motive, which he ruthlessly exposed and derided, was at the bottom of this peevishness to which every one except honest Uncle Robert and their own little household had become a victim.

Mr. Browne's recovery might have achieved one benefit to his kith and kin. If they could only have combined and consorted for any purpose under the sun, they would now have done so, in the glow of their indignation, to abolish for ever the foolish custom of clustering like vultures about a dying relative, taking up a sick man's hand and dropping it as if it were a hot potato, and then sneaking out of his presence like petty larcenists.

Whatever his remoter kindred might do or leave undone, all the family at Pedlington returned to their filial allegiance, and placed Bedford Lyte (the man whom they already loved, now in possession of a name which they had learned to dread) upon a pinnacle of love and esteem. The sad feature in the case was that now, for these five years, he never would come near them. Dr. Phelps, now one of Mr. Browne's favourites, had often visited him at Oxford, and had travelled with him in Europe. Captain Fuller, who had sensibly transferred his affections to Nelly, frequently visited Lyte at Oxford, and received him at Watermead. Frank visited him twice, at long intervals. Hubert twice at shorter intervals; but to Pedlington he never came. 'He must have heard of the disease among the tulip bulbs in Kent,' said Nelly. Suns set; moons waned. The former rose, the latter were restored again, as the poet observes. Then it all happened over again and again. At last the course of nature waxed exceedingly monotonous, and the social order flat, stale, and unprofitable to Janet. She had no work to do, except those everlasting gloves and shirt buttons of Frank's, and certain pretty little needle tricks that will not occupy the heart or mind. She could not (after the manner of her kind)

enjoy from time to time the innocent excitement of wondering, before a ball or picnic, about some possible lover, and regulating her own behaviour (real or imaginary) toward the mysterious *inconnu*. Nor could she, as an honest girl, deliberately ogle, entrap, grab, strangle and scrunch the bones of any unsuspecting lover, as a spider uses a fly, knowing all the time that she could award him no other treatment when caught. Novels were utterly vapid to her perceptions unless they portrayed a character like her 'Sir'; if they did so, it drove her mad to read them. And how could she live without love, now that love had so absorbed and swallowed up her former life that she could not remember it, and wondered how she had dragged on her existence from day to day and week to week without it? Yet, not being any longer able to live without this elixir of life, how was the supply of it to be maintained within her? Would love continue to subsist on one little recollection, like the widow on her cruse of oil? Alas! alas! The cruet was already failing—had failed almost, and was well-nigh empty; so she thought. Her heart was heavy and weary within her, and sick with hope deferred, and sore with vain regrets.

To see Nelly loving and loved, as she did daily now, really and steadfastly loved by a true and loyal man (though she had rejected him herself), was maddening. Now that Nelly had occupied that forlorn fortress, his heart, she was almost tempted to flirt with Captain Fuller from sheer mischief and a splenetic desire to inflict a wrong upon that obdurate 'Sir' who left her to suffer beyond her power of endurance, to wait beyond her patience, to exhaust her fortitude, to sin, if she



would, without a word of comfort, support, or counsel from his lips. And all for what? Some sullen ghost of barren honour, some verbal, perhaps legal, bond to one whom he never had and never could love. Oh, how she would like to get at that cruel woman, that Eleanor, and stab her to the heart!—drive the dagger home, as she had read in some old legend, till the haft struck against her ribs.

It is not too much to say that at times she was carried away by a passionate desire to commit this crime, and thought herself in serious danger of yielding to the temptation and making that homicidal expedition to the quaint old Belgian city. But with regard to Bedford Lyte, she so longed and grew sick of vainly longing for him and his love, that after two years of it she would assuredly have thrown patience to the winds, abandoned all conventional restraints, and gone to him, had she not too clearly foreseen how he would act. She would have gone to him and said, 'Here I am, Sir. Here is your poor little Janet, to whom you gave a fortune, but whose heart you took away. Only let me stay and be near you always. Do not send me back, Sir.'

Not only did she desire to do this foolish thing, but would actually have done it had she not seen, as in a vision, his calm relentless frown, more in sorrow than in anger, but still immovable even by her tears and cajoleries—had she not heard, as in a trance, his voice pronouncing her sentence of banishment, which would then have been irreversible. He would have taken her back, as cold and hard as a statue himself, and given her up to humiliation and despair. Yes, he would, assuredly give her up and banish her for ever on account of that ghost of barren

honour, that legal fiction, which bound him to a woman who was *not* his wife. 'For I am his true wife,' she would aver to her own heart, 'in virtue of this love that I bear to him.' From this she would draw some comfort. 'And does he not love me?' she would ask herself. 'Am I not his own little girl, to whom he gave this splendid fortune, which I thought so little of before, so much now? He would not give it to any one else, only to me. Twelve thousand five hundred pounds! So much! why, the interest alone is four hundred and six pounds five shillings a year, and I have already saved five hundred pounds to give Nelly when she is married. He gave it to me. He loves me. I heard him say so. I heard. I was listening at the door.' Then she repeated to herself those delicious words which she had overheard at the door of Frank's bedroom. That was her one luxury, poor little innocent. She had not even the green cotton umbrella now. But she had one little gift, only one. How she did treasure it! in what a system of bags it dwelt! First leather (*chamois*), then one of silk, then holland, double and wadded between, then velvet, embroidered and fringed and beaded, with the monogram S. J. worked upon it.

Frank had been spending a few days at Oxford with his friend. The days, few in number, were past, but not a word of Janet had been spoken, except in the first general inquiry about the health of 'the young ladies.' Since then every other member of the Browne family had, at one time or another, come on the *tapis* and been talked of, but Frank could see that Janet was a sealed book in the memory of Lyte. Just as they had seated themselves in the carriage which had been ordered to take the

Adonis with his morocco bags and valises, his canes and his travelling wrappers, to the station, Frank said in his usual indifferent drawl, 'Oh, ah! by-the-way, Lyte, I forgot that *fleur d'Italie*. Could you drive me past a perfumer's? Janet wants a bottle of that new scent, and all the places in London will be closed when I pass through to-night.'

At the words 'Janet wants,' something inside Bedford's waistcoat gave such a bound that a button nearly flew off. Before Frank had finished his argument Mr. Lyte's head and shoulders were out of the window. In another minute the carriage stopped, and he sprang out saying, 'Sit still and take care of the traps. I won't be two minutes.' In about that time they were again on the move.

'Oh, yes. Thank you very much. How much was it?' Frank inquires.

'Never you mind,' said Lyte abruptly. 'Give it her from me. Any one can give a lady a bottle of scent.'

'But it isn't every one who can, and I never met another man who would, give a girl a nice fortune; though I have encountered two or three who would *take* one if they could get it, and put up with the girl to boot.'

This was the first intimation which Lyte had received that the Brownes knew of his generosity in destroying his grandfather's will, although he had been informed of the change of feeling which Mr. Browne had expressed toward the once-hated Bedford Lyte when the lawyer was supposed to be dying. He had feared that any such knowledge would distress them, and hoped it would never reach their ears. But Frank went on ruthlessly: 'We all know of your noble-hearted generosity,

my good fellow, and repent the cruel injustice we had formerly done you. But you will do me the justice to remember how heartily I wished Mr. Lane to marry Janet, and so recover the fortune I wanted to keep from Bedford Lyte.'

'I shall not forget it in a hurry.'

'And I need hardly tell you how I wish it could be so still. I cannot give up hope. Surely you could get a divorce. Janet is the same, only more beautiful than ever. The men rave about her. But I don't want this feeling to consume her, Lyte. I care more for Janet than the money, though you may think me mercenary.'

The murder was out now at the last moment.

'May you not be mistaken about her feeling?' asked Lyte, as the carriage was checked at the door of the station.

'No. She tells me a good deal, and I see more.'

When Frank had consigned everything except a favourite dressing-case to a porter, and taken his ticket, Lyte said eagerly, 'It must be starved out, Frank. She is young, and will yet form a strong, healthy regard for another man. It is impossible for me to drag that poor creature from the privacy of her convent, and parade her old shame and misery before the world. And if that were done, I could not marry. Only death can sever that bond. Give Janet that bottle of scent from yourself, and you can pay me when we meet again. The train is off now. Good-bye.'

Frank was borne away from his benefactor with a sore heart and a measure of anger in it. His regard for Lyte was sincere, but he growled at him as a quixotic pedant, not being able to rise to the moral level which was the other

man's natural atmosphere. That little bottle, however, was Janet's treasure. She had wheedled the secret out of Frank. 'I love her, I love her,' the dumb bottle seemed to say whenever she looked at it.

The four years of Lyte's Oxford career passed quickly enough with him, though not without constant effort, as time will pass to a man with manifold and absorbing interests. It must be a very different thing to be a young lady in a torpid country town. First and foremost stood his intellectual struggle, in which he was even more strenuously engaged than those who saw his exterior calm imagined to be the case. This could not and did not cure him of love, but was so exacting to his powers and satisfying to that love of conflict and excitement which rules within a strong man as to preclude all danger of love-sickness. Not that the possibility of love-sickness was absolutely removed from Lyte's path, as he would have discovered in double-quick time had he yielded to intellectual languor. Often in those sad, silent, solitary night watches, when the mind of a man strays from its nearer interests and goes back pitifully to those dearer ones which are as lost, the memory of Janet Browne, endued with that irresistible fascination which had mastered him in former days, came and stood before him in all its old power of beauty and sweetness. Sooth to say, at those times the strong man was nearly overcome. The vision would appear before him as the fair girl herself had done on a certain night in the little tea-room during her mother's evening party. Silently it always seemed to stand and appeal to him by its aspect. Yet did he never forget that her voice in speaking was low and sweet, like

the breath of summer among dewy leaves. But with all his might he would put these visions away from him, and force his mind into its wonted groove, and urge it along with the power of his trained will, until these images were chased away from the retina of his imagination and the danger past. How different it was perforce with her!

Then, in addition to his studies, and in wholesome relief of the strain upon his mental faculties, Bedford Lyte had his boating, swimming, and running to occupy much time and attention, to call into action and expend much superfluous energy, and afford a useful vent for the enthusiasm of his disposition. Being a large and powerful man as well as a skilful oarsman, he rowed for the first year as No. 4 in his college eight-oared boat, which gained several places on the river during the college races. The next year he was picked out of his own boat on account of his splendid style and great strength to row No. 4 in the second university boat, which was preparing to supplement any gaps in the first boat, then training for the great race with Cambridge. At first he declined this honour, but, being pressed, acceded to the wishes of his friends merely to assist in perfecting the second or subsidiary boat. At the same time he positively asserted that in no case would he join the racing crew. After about four weeks of training, however, he found his mind rather invigorated than exhausted by the severe physical exercise and the enforced regular hours, and having measured out his book-work, and found that he could do as much as before, ceded that point. The No. 4 originally chosen for the first boat, a man his equal in style and strength, but younger and less

vigorous in constitution, began to spit blood, as is often the case under a too-severe trial of the powers of endurance. So Bedford Lyte went into the racing crew, and rowed in two successive years in the great university race on the Thames.

Being thus continually in good bodily condition, his college, who were proud of their champion, urged him to enter for the university athletic sports, in which he more than once gained distinction for himself and them. The training necessary for these exploits, which occasionally proves too severe for a minor, whose vital energy may not be equal to his muscular strength, was really of permanent service to Lyte both intellectually and physically. It obliged him to abandon that pernicious habit of working at night into which he had fallen, and habituated him to a simple, regular dietetic system, besides endowing him with a hearty and unflinching appetite. All these things are inimical to any excesses of a fertile imagination.

But we should hardly have entered so fully into these retrospective details were it not that these distinctions, even more perhaps than the academical honours gained by her hero, brought the name of Bedford Lyte in all its glory so continually before Janet as to keep her in a kind of intermittent fever of enthusiasm and suspense. For weeks before a university boat-race she would wear nothing but Oxford blue. Before the great event came off she could have laid violent hands on any person who sported the paler (Cambridge) hue. After each of her hero's victories she would subside into a week's delicious security, and take to her bosom any acquaintance who had been interested in the

losing boat. She made Frank subscribe to the Oxford 'Chronicle,' from which paper and from the 'Times' she would cut out every paragraph which chronicled the name and achievements of her lover. She literally despised all other men in her mental comparison of them with him, and believed him to be the most profound scholar and peerless Paladin who ever dazzled a benighted world. Moreover—and this was the most delicious assurance of all—she knew that if he was, in his romantic sense of honour, depriving her even of his friendship and fraternal regard, it was not because any other girl had fascinated, or could fascinate, him. Of this she was absolutely certain. He only kept away because her spell upon him was too potent, because he was afraid of loving her 'not wisely, but too well.'

Before every long vacation and every Christmas vacation went forth a kind and friendly invitation from the Brownes of Pedlington to the Oxford student. Yet he never came. Frank went to him twice during those four years, Hubert went to him twice, and each brought back little crumbs of comfort for Janet. She had formed quite an attachment for Dr. Phelps too, and that genius contrived to impart some morsels of gratification and relief to her weary spirit.

Mr. Browne, who had almost entirely recovered his own vigour, entertained an increasing respect for the young man whom he had once abhorred, thinking it both wise and generous of him to persist in refusing the invitations which he still thought proper to have sent twice each year without fail. To one Lyte would write and say he was in rigid training for some Corinthian games, and would be executed by lynch-law if he dared to move from Oxford; to another

that only the day before its receipt he had engaged to go on the Continent with a friend, or on a walking tour in Wales, or somewhere, and with some purpose incompatible with a visit to Kent.

All this time, however, Eleanor Baily, as they still called her in their secret conclave, was alive, and it was therefore right and honourable on the part of her unfortunate husband to keep away from another young lady whose charms had already proved too much for him. But by a strange and, as it at first seemed to Janet, by a providential coincidence, in the very week after Bedford's final examination at Oxford, while he and all his friends were waiting in breathless suspense for the *lists* to be issued and his academical fate made known, news of Eleanor Baily's death in the nunnery in Belgium came to Pedlington. Mr. Browne would have concealed it a while, but Miss Lyte wrote to Janet and told her with a crow of delight. Then the class lists appeared, and Bedford Lyte was *facile princeps*, the Senior Classic of his year, thus verifying Martin's ancient avowal that 'Mr. Lane' was 'no end of a scholar.' That young gentleman, who had faith-

fully adhered to his old master, and made fair progress in the face of his difficulties, was enrolled among the third class in classical honours.

Janet was in a flutter of expectation. Would *he* come at last? Not Martin. She knew too well that Martin would come. He still worshipped the boards on which she capered with 'the light fantastic too;' for Janet had continued to appear at balls, though with a somewhat forlorn and Lenten aspect. Martin came, flushed with his virgin honours, to lay them at her feet, but 'Sir' neither came nor wrote. 'They'll give him a fellowship now, you know. They want to have him for classical lecturer,' said Martin. Janet stamped, and blushed, and frowned. She wouldn't take the heir of Plumstead Manor, with his third class. She wanted the Senior Classic, and the biggest man in the university boat. But 'those horrid old trumps' *did* make Mr. Lyte a fellow, and offered him the lectureship, which he declined, and went incontinently off to Mexico as a war correspondent. This was the climax of Janet's woe, the last feather which broke the camel's back.

(To be continued.)



## OTTER-HUNTING ON THE COQUET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'MOUNTAIN, MEADOW, AND MERE.'

THE otter is now the only really wild beast of the chase in Great Britain. The fox is preserved and taken as much care of as any domestic animal until his turn comes to be hunted. The otter, on the contrary, has every man's hand against him. Wherever his existence is suspected he is watched for and shot or trapped. If he were not nocturnal in his habits, he would long ago have been exterminated. As it is, he is rarely seen unless he is hunted or watched for with a view to his destruction. The angler who reaches the river-side early in the morning—soon after dawn it must be—sometimes catches a glimpse of him, or more frequently only hears his loud plunge into the water as he approaches.

The otter is the very shyest of animals, and it is only natural that the great increase in the number of anglers who visit all our rivers should have driven him farther and farther north—to the wildest and most unapproachable streams. We cannot help regretting that so interesting a denizen should become so scarce. Like the golden eagle, it is an ornament to our *fauna* that those of us who are naturalists and sportsmen can ill afford to lose.

In appearance the otter is like a magnified polecat, but dark brown in colour, and with a bulldog-like head. Like the polecat, its body is long and flexible, and is very strong and muscular. Its bite is a very formidable one, and often makes sad havoc among the hounds. It swims swiftly, if under the water, coming to the surface every now and then to breathe, or 'vent,' as it is technically called. It

makes its habitation in holes in the river-bank, the entrances to which are usually under water and between the roots of a tree—a very stronghold of a place, from which it is often impossible to dislodge it.

The rocky trout-streams of the west and north are the places where the otter is usually found, and where it is hunted. There are but few packs of otter-hounds in England, and the sport can never be a general one. The hounds employed are a variety of the old southern hound, about the size of a fox-hound, but heavier in build, and long-haired and shaggy. They are not very swift, but are of necessity good swimmers. They are very savage, and frequently quarrel—even sometimes killing each other in their fury. Terriers, too, are necessary to make the otter bolt from his 'hover' or 'holt.'

Of course otter-hunting is followed in the summer-time, and on foot; and if one really works with the hounds, it is often the hardest of hard work, but healthy and invigorating.

For many years I had longed to make one in an otter-hunt, and when at last the opportunity came, I gladly seized it. It was in Northumberland, and the hounds—a private pack—were to meet at Felton, on the far-famed Coquet. The meet was fixed for four o'clock one Monday morning, an hour which seems unearthly to dwellers in towns. It was necessary, however, to meet thus early, as the day dawned about two o'clock, and the scent of the otter would rapidly vanish under the rays of the sun.

Sunday evening saw a number



of us proceeding by train to Acklington Station. Upon arriving there, we found it was an hour's walk to Felton. The only conveyance there was would hold but few of us; so, consigning our luggage to the care of the driver, those of us who did not secure a seat dived into a wood and took a very pretty path which would lead us by a short cut to Felton. As we trudged along, under the guidance of one of our number, who declared he knew the way, and who, by-the-way, succeeded in getting us very nicely lost, we discussed our chance of finding accommodation at the village inn. It was clear that some of us would have to be contented with sofas and chairs for the night.

At nine o'clock we reached the inn. After some discussion, each man had his sleeping quarters assigned to him, and then we turned our attention to ordering something to eat. Ham and eggs and tea were soon forthcoming. Two huge dishes piled up with ham and new-laid eggs fairly frightened even nine hungry men. I never saw such a quantity cooked before. It seemed an almost hopeless task to begin to demolish it, and ere half had gone the way of all (eatable) flesh we had to give in.

At eleven o'clock somebody suggested that we had better go to bed early, as we had to be up early; so, after a nightcap of whisky, we retired, or rather endeavoured to do so; for those who had to sleep on sofas, &c., had great difficulty in turning the men out of their rooms, there being a general inclination to sit up and talk. One man had been down to the river to see if he could discover the 'seal' or track of an otter. He had done so, and had brought back indisputable evidence of an otter's presence in his purse. At length the house was

quiet, and we tried to sleep. I was fortunate in sharing a bedroom with an acquaintance. The bed was not large enough for two, so I had the feather-bed on the floor with a portion of the bedclothes, and my companion slept on the mattress.

I had not been many minutes in bed ere I discovered that it was quite damp; I mentioned this, and my companion replied, 'Well, my bed is as hard as a third-class carriage, so I don't think we are either of us in for a very comfortable night.'

Between the novelty of the position, the fear of taking harm from the damp, and the knowledge that I had to be up so early, I did not sleep a wink. I tossed and turned about in the most uncomfortable fashion, and anathematised otter-hunting and all belonging to it. To add to my discomfort, it apparently came on to rain.

The drops fell so fast, as I thought, and so unceasingly, that I gave all hope of sport on the morrow. At last I got up and put my head out of the window, and was relieved to find that I had only heard the sound of the wind rustling the foliage of some trees that grew close to our bedroom window. It was beautifully fine. The moonlight was just paling in the coming dawn, and the grey river was just visible in the reach above the bridge.

'What time is it?' asked a discontented voice from the bed.

'Hallo! I thought you were asleep; I have been envying you. It is two o'clock.'

'Asleep! I haven't slept a wink, and I'll be shot if I'll ever come otter-hunting again.'

In half an hour's time we could hear that the others were astir; so we got up and dressed. At three o'clock we had breakfast. We were certainly a picturesque

group. The master was dressed in a scarlet jacket and cap, and had his brass horn slung across his breast. The rest of us were attired in rough-and-ready costumes. Knickerbockers with stout boots seemed to be the most serviceable. Presently we heard the blast of a horn echoing shrilly in the morning air, and then a musical yelp.

'The hounds!' we cried, and rushed to the window to catch a glimpse of the long-eared beauties.

'Now, gentlemen, if you have finished your breakfasts, we will be up and away. The early hound catches the otter.'

So off we trooped. When we got outside, we saw that Felton is indeed a lovely spot. The Coquet is here the very beau ideal of a trout stream. Clear and sparkling like champagne, it froths and flows over and between rocks and stones and down long stretches of dark pebbles and golden gravel. Swirling around stones from which the long moss trails in the eddy, bubbling and seething under tree-roots and projecting crags, widening out into clear pools by grey stone bridges, and darkening into long deeps, there is every variety of feeding and playing ground for the red-spotted trout. But we must leave the fish alone for to-day, tempting as they are; so we proceeded up the river with the hounds. Most of us struck a point far in advance of where the master first set the hounds to work, and we waited in the white morning stillness for them to come up. Soon we heard the crack of the whips, and presently saw a terrier splashing about from stone to stone. Then Towler, a good hound, but too eager, came racing along, just sniffing here and there, but in far too much of a hurry to be hunting well. 'Go back, Towler, go back, sir!' was the cry. Towler went back, and when all the

hounds came up we accompanied them up the river.

The dogs hunted well up both sides of the river, smelling and examining every rock and mud-bank, and scanning curiously every hole and tree-root. We—the hunters—did not number more than a dozen. The pack consisted of about seven couples. It was amusing to watch the busy air with which the terriers darted about. They evidently thought they were quite as important as the larger dogs.

We disturbed the heron at its morning meal, the trout scurried over the shallows in rare affright, and the waterhens scuttled out of their cover at the water's edge in a state of indignant protest at our untimely invasion. The keen morning air and the excitement of the chase effectually dispelled the weariness the uncomfortable night had caused.

Presently Towler, who, as usual, had forged ahead, gave tongue loudly. Far before us we saw him on a rock in the middle of the river, with elevated head, belling out his musical note as if mad with joy, and utterly unable to restrain himself at having discovered the scent or 'drag' of an otter. The other hounds raced up to him and gave tongue also, and set off up stream at a good pace, the field following, confident that sport was afoot.

I suddenly found myself alone on what was evidently the wrong side of the river, and my further progress was barred by an unfriendly combination of rocks and trees. I dashed into the river and made for the opposite bank. Alas! wet stones are slippery, and holes are ready to entrap the unwary; so head foremost I went into a pretty deep one, and spluttered out the other side, wet through. Never mind, it was all in the day's

work, and I reached the bank and ran on in pursuit of the hounds. Alas! the deep chorus of the pack dwindled down to two or three feeble notes uttered by the youngest hounds. The drag was lost. The otter had given us the slip, and we must try for another. We came to an island where many an otter has been killed; the hounds worked around and about, but were mute. There was no otter there. As the banks of the river farther up were thickly wooded, and the river was hard to hunt, the master decided on going back and trying the river below Felton. It was then only half-past six o'clock, and yet it seemed as if we had done a fair day's work already. One or two men began to hang out signals of distress, while it was plain that the early rising had not agreed with others. The walk back through the meadows and woods was very pleasant; the perfume of the new-mown hay that was lying in cocks in the fields was most exquisite; the green of the grass and the foliage shone brilliantly through the gleaming drops of dew. To breathe the sweet fresh air was as exhilarating as to drink of the best sparkling wine. To some of us it was an utterly new experience, and we hoped the day would be long, for we wished to have as much of it as possible. Even the water itself had a cooler, fresher look in the early morning; it looked as though it had bathed itself and come out more brilliantly clear and beautiful. We tramped onward through the woods, where the rabbit rustled through the brake and bramble, and the jay flew screaming above us. The master in his scarlet coat, the brown dogs, the roughly-clad men, the whip with his long spear; no wonder we startled the sleepy gamekeeper who had just

turned out of his cottage and gazed suspiciously at us. Hitherto we had been the only people astir, we were 'monarchs of all we surveyed.' We might trespass and do as we liked, for there was no one to say us nay, and we felt in a delicious state of freedom and wildness.

Soon we reached the village, where there was scarcely any one astir. How superior we felt to those sluggards who at seven o'clock in the morning were yet in bed. There is no vanity so great as that of the early riser, and the seldomer he rises early the vainer he is when he does so.

We rested on the bridge while some one went to the inn to see that our luggage was forwarded to Acklington, where we should meet it. In the pool under the bridge the trout leaped merrily; they were most of them small, but what they lacked in size they made up in number; they swarmed like minnows, and jostled each other when an unlucky gnat touched the water, in their eagerness to get at it.

After a short rest, we proceeded down the right bank of the river, the hounds hunting less wildly than they did at first. After we had gone nearly a mile in silence, Beauty, a young hound, opened cry at a strong hover beneath the gnarled roots of a large oak. Most of the dogs followed his example, and it was the general impression that the otter was at home. The terriers were put in, men stationed themselves in the water at the fords above and below the hover that they might catch a glimpse of the otter if he bolted. Five of the heaviest men jumped up and down on the bank to shake the earth and frighten the quarry out. It certainly was a most ludicrous sight to see them jumping solemnly up and down as if suddenly gone demented. A large rat ran

out, and some one on the bank cried out, amid a roar of laughter,

'Tally ho! there's the otter! Oh law! no! it is only a rat.'

The hounds were called off, as the otter was evidently not at home. They soon after hit a burning drag, and raced off down the river at headlong speed, every hound joining in the mellow chorus. For half a mile the pace was severe, and it was 'bellows to mend' with some of us. On our right hand was the steep bank of the river, on the left a cornfield, and we ran along a narrow strip of meadow, the hay off which had been cut and was lying in cocks at short intervals. Over these cocks we had to jump, and as legs got tired their owners tripped and rolled over. Still the hounds ran on, and we were approaching a wood. It certainly would not do, I thought, for me to be behind any one else while racing through the wood, as I should get severely punished by the branches springing back from those in front of me. Therefore I put on a spurt, and got ahead just in time to be the first in the narrow path through the copse; a position I succeeded in keeping. We were now overtaking the hounds, which had hitherto kept us astern. They were not owning the scent so freely; they quessed about the banks and swam to and fro in the water in an evident state of uncertainty. We came to a weir and a mill. Some men crossed over the weir, but they appeared to have so much difficulty in doing it, as they slowly picked their way along the slippery edge of the fall, the water rushing up to their knees, and a roaring pool below them, that the more prudent ones made a *détour* round by the mill. Here the hounds were quite at fault. Towler gave tongue up a burn, but it was only after a rabbit, and he got a

cut with the whip, and the warning 'ware rabbit.'

We found by experience that the river-bed below the weir was anything but safe wading. It is formed of sloping surfaces of rock, and when you step on the shallow end, as you must, you slip right away into deep water, and cannot help yourself.

Suddenly there was a cry and loud splash. Some one, in trying to jump down six feet of rock into the river bed, had caught his foot in a bramble, and came down head first, and a severe sprained wrist was the result. This was the only accident that occurred during the day, although there were, of course, many narrow escapes. A hound fell over at the same place, and this was the only slip I saw a hound make. As a rule, they are wonderfully sure-footed, stepping over tree-roots and scrambling up steep banks with the activity of a cat.

A whimper was heard behind us. We dashed back again, hunting the back track. Suddenly there was an angry challenge by two or three dogs who had lingered behind. 'Tally ho!'—the otter had been seen; and, feeling as fresh as we did five hours ago, we rushed to the spot. It was a reach of still, deep water. See! that train of bubbles along the surface! See! a round, bullet-shaped black head popping out of the water! It was the otter 'venting.' The dogs saw him, and hounds and terriers swam after him, encouraged by our voices. Backwards and forwards, from side to side, they swam, the water being intersected by the widening lines of ripple that followed the track of each dog, until it was marked across and across, like a church window with its diamond panes.

The otter at last took to a hover, the other side of the river, and the dogs bayed and jostled around it.

There was no one to help them. The river was deep and wide. It was not easy to swim with one's clothes on. There was no other way of getting across, however, so some of us took to the water, and reached the other side in safety. The entrance to the hover was under water, and it was with some difficulty that two terriers were put in it. The scene was a most animated one. Men were prodding with poles and jumping on the bank, and the dogs were literally frantic with excitement. It would evidently be a long job to dislodge the otter; and those of us who were not occupied stretched themselves on the fragrant hay, and tried to dry themselves in the hot rays of the sun, which glared down upon us from a cloudless sky.

I began to feel uncommonly hungry, and, rather than undergo the discomfort of an empty and clamorous stomach, I ran back to the mill, three-quarters of a mile away, and begged two huge hunks of bread-and-butter. With one in each hand I trotted contentedly back again, and satiated my hunger, washing the provender down with some whisky from my flask.

As it appeared impossible to make the otter bolt, a council of war was held, and it was decided to give up for the day. The master, too, had to attend a polo match in the afternoon, and he must get away by train. He blew a strong blast on his horn, the dogs were called off, and we trudged off to the mill. Some, however, were loth to go home without killing an otter, and at last it was arranged that half-a-dozen of us should hunt the hounds lower down the river.

We walked down for another mile without hearing any welcome note from the hounds. At last they tailed off up a burn, but still in silence. As the day was hot and

the hill steep, I and three others lay down on the grass, thinking it most unlikely that an otter would be found up such a tiny stream. Oh, how pleasant it was to rest after such hard work—to listen to the song that fell downwards from that speck in the blue sky—to watch the gay butterflies fluttering over the flowery slopes! One could go to sleep, it was so pleasant. But hark! Not only one hound was belling, but the whole pack—the sweetest and loudest burst of music we had heard that day. We got up hastily, and bravely breasted the hill down which the tiny burn was leaping. Alas! the gorse and bracken were nearly waist high, and our progress was greatly impeded. Still on we panted, and entered the very thickest and most brambly wood that was ever seen. The undergrowth was breast high, and under foot it was strewn with treacherous fallen branches that tripped one up, and rabbit-holes as traps for the unwary. Oh! it was desperately hard work, and we were almost dead beat. We must overtake the hounds, however. Hark how madly they give tongue! The cries of those ahead, too, were encouraging, and we heard that some one had had a view.

Thinking that it would be easier making one's way along the bed of the burn, we tried walking through the wood parallel to it, and some distance above it, as the hounds were doing. I dashed down to it, taking huge leaps over the underwood. I alighted upon a sloping branch, and slipped. My legs flew from under me, and my head struck the earth only six inches from a sharp-pointed stake. I proceeded more carefully after that. Hurrah! there was the end of the wood. We had had a mile of it, and our veins were throbbing, our hearts were beating violently, and our 'wind' was gone.

We emerged upon a cornfield, where men were engaged in reaping the corn. The burn was here nothing but a ditch, and at the farther end of the field the hounds cast about at fault. They had over-run the scent.

'We have lost him.'

'Did you ever have such a run in your life?'

'No; I cannot run another yard.'

'Tally ho! tally ho! Tail him!—tail him there! He is making back for the wood. Stop him!—tail him!'

The otter leaped along like a cat right towards us across the field, and then turned off, when he saw us, towards the burn. The man who 'could not run another yard' made a rush at him, and, just as the otter slipped into the ditch through a bramble bush, he caught him by the tail and swung him up, holding him until the hounds came up, when he was thrown to them. He was not dead yet, however, and he made a vigorous fight, snapping and biting right and left. He was overpowered by numbers,

and at last a torn and mangled object was all that remained of a fine dog otter.

It was two o'clock. We were all frightfully hungry. It was extremely hot, and the flies were troublesome. We thankfully accepted the hospitable invitation to lunch of a neighbouring squire. A stampede was made for brandy-and-soda, to keep the cold out. Many of us were wet through. Then followed beer, a good beef-steak, sherry, cigars, and more brandy; for, in spite of the heat of the sun, we shivered in our damp things.

A walk of three miles brought us to Acklington. At the inn we managed, though not without some difficulty in procuring soap and towels, to have a good wash, and effect a thorough change of clothing.

We were, of course, stiff and tired, but were otherwise none the worse for our day's otter-hunting.

I look forward eagerly to the next time I may hear the splendid cry of the otter-hounds, and be present at the 'tailing' of an otter.





## 'MAD AS A HATTER.'

(OLD SAYING.)

‘**A** LAS, how light a cause may move dissension between hearts that love!’ That’s very true. But I’m not sure that it *was* so light a cause. Any way she oughtn’t to have sold my hat. ‘Old?’ well, I don’t see what that has to do with the matter; and if you come to that, all hats will become old hats if you only keep them long enough. Besides, what man of refinement, of a poetic nature, of æsthetic tastes, loves not an old friend—coat—hat—man or—woman? well, no, perhaps not exactly that—substitute another W, say wine—better than a new or young one!

But I don’t put it on this footing at all. It was an act (1) of rebellion against my lawful and marital authority, as ecclesiastically, and with her own free will—*very* free will—and consent, bestowed upon me at the altar, and (2) it was a laceration of my individual feelings, an insult offered to what she must have known to be a well-established and, may be, oft-ridden hobby. For, ‘my love,’ I had often said, using a conjugal and somewhat metaphorical expression—‘my love, I have no insane objection to flowers of peripatetic growth, nor any morbid antipathy to antique vases (fresh from the potteries), purchased from the family of Moses during his suburban rambles; but when you have done making your own costly exchanges and have bartered for three geraniums and a glass milk-jug (blown, not cut), a dress not very much used, for which I had the happiness of paying, at no remote date, two, or it may be more guineas, I claim my privilege of being consulted as to

the final, or even the intermediate, destination of my own proper and virile garments.’

It was a long speech, and I am, habitually, a man of few words, but I was moved—moved to the very heart. What! mine own familiar friend, beneath whose shade I had often indulged in the pleasing thoughts and fancies—But, no mat-ter. I only wish to account for, and to palliate the emotional ejaculation which escaped from my pent-up bosom when she greeted me with the remark—playfully uttered more-over:

‘I have sold your old hat, dear.’

The rejoinder I made, and I am sorry to place it on record, was this. I said, —!

It was only one word. There were four syllables in it, it is true, but it seemed to me, nevertheless, an aggravation of my wrong, an adding of insult to injury, that she should at once assume an offended air, and look as if *she* were the injured party, and not I.

We had been married for three blissful years (more or less blissful), and up to that particular day, neither at bed nor board, had aught occurred to divorce us even for a single occasion. On that day, however, after washing and deliberating, I felt it incumbent on me to express my own displeasure in a manner that should be unmistakable, and strike terror, never to be forgotten, at once and for ever into ‘the enemy’s’ breast.

I put on my hat—it was another hat, and it rather hurt—and without trusting myself to go through the parliamentary ordeal of ‘catching the speaker’s eye,’ I

remarked, 'I am going to dine with Tomkins; when I have dined with Tomkins, I am going to town again.' And while my grasp was on the door-handle, I added, 'on business—business of importance.' There was nothing either sarcastic or unvarnished in this supplementary close of my hard-hearted speech—she called it a hard-hearted speech many a time afterwards—neither was it a happy thought resuscitated. N.B. I don't think the very happiest thoughts bear resuscitation. I simply said what I meant, and what the interval of lavatory and meditative pursuits had instructed me to say.

It was on business, and the business was, as will presently appear, important.

My friend Tomkins—Jabez was his sponsorial prefix—my friend Jabez Tomkins, I say, was as good a fellow as any man need desire for a friend: 'trusty Tomkins,' we called him at Stubbs—Stubbs, Weathercoddle and Mumblebury is an old-established firm to which we both belonged—not after that fashion of trustiness described by the immortal novelist in 'Woodstock,' but because no one who knew him would not have trusted him confidently with all that was dearest to him. Still Tomkins had his peculiarities: one of these was that, although a most matter-of-fact and open-minded person himself, he loved mystery in all that belonged to others. If a thing could not possibly be twisted by any effort of the most tortuous imagination into a mysterious fold, you might still and notwithstanding—*crede* Tomkins—'depend upon it there was something in it.' Another peculiarity of my dear friend consisted in a double, or rather alternative, greeting with which he invariably saluted his intimates. If you looked merry, ere you could speak Tomkins had

exclaimed, 'Hulloa, old fellow, what's up?' If, on the contrary, you looked sad, Tomkins ejaculated, 'Hulloa, old fellow, what's wrong?' In each case, if uncovered, he seized his hat; if he had it on, he took it off. No wonder, therefore, that, my soul being troubled and my spirit sad within me by reason of the loss of that particular tegument, I should hasten to disburden my sorrows to Tomkins.

He was at home when I called, as I knew he would be. Recognising me by the individuality of my knock, he himself rushed to the door, and nearly choked himself in his eagerness, on seeing my *triste* expression of face, to ascertain, while his mouth was full, what was wrong.

I told my friend that he must give me some dinner, and then some counsel, and after that, if needs be, his companionship back to the City. All of which he cheerfully undertook to do.

'It's a very mysterious business, my dear fellow—at least it will be—to recover that particular hat; but rely on me; if any man can help you, I can—and will. We must go back to London; we will take a cab; and, let me see, we will drive to Whitechapel direct.'

Thus Tomkins to me, after I had given him the few particulars, and one or two more, which are here set down.

'Whitechapel! Why Whitechapel?'

'Oh, don't you trouble, you leave the matter to me; we must keep it dark;' and then, after a moment's pause, and rising to ring the bell, he added with emphasis, '*very* dark.'

The cab was ordered, and we were soon *en route* for that region, which was to me as much *terra incognita* as Iceland or Siberia. As we lived in the neighbourhood

of Hammersmith, since by postal authority named W., and we were bound for Whitechapel, since christened E., and as there was then no (well-managed) Metropolitan Railway, we of course had a tolerably long drive in store. The first thing that forced itself on my attention during our progress was that Tomkins had already established a 'mysterious' understanding with the driver. For on each occasion that, for some cause or other to me unknown—and these occasions were of constant recurrence—Jabez wished to stop, the cab was pulled up with a suddenness which was not only mysterious to myself, but unpleasant. On these occasions Tomkins would always get out. 'Don't you stir, old fellow. Keep it dark. Three minutes.' These were his usual words while in the act of alighting from the vehicle. I observed also that our Jehu mostly got off his box, and that in every case there was a whispered conversation carried on between them. I didn't know whether to be amused or irritated by this absurd behaviour, as I thought it; but, as I was sensible, somewhere in my inmost consciousness, of playing myself a rather absurd part, I contented myself, or feigned contentment, when in reply to my questions I received the invariable reply, 'It is all right,' when I knew it to be all wrong, or 'Couldn't be going on better,' as if I were a newly-born baby or its blessed mother.

There was another thing I observed. On a plurality of 'stages' our driver made a very ready and cordial response to my friend's question—put with a due regard to keeping up the mystery and preserving inviolable secrecy—'What he would drink.' I alighted myself, I confess it, more than

once, partly from curiosity, partly from thirst; and it struck me that the voice of our Jehu on each occasion waxed not only huskier, but more familiar. I took it for granted, at about the thirteenth stage (at which I assisted), that the rubicundity of our charioteer's nose, and the knowing manner in which he caused his dexter fore-finger to encircle that feature as he uttered the words, 'Right you har, guvner,' and the hurried wink by which the voice and action were accompanied, were part and parcel of the mystery. I began to wish, though, that our drive were finished. And so indeed it was, or very nearly so; for ere we reached another stage, a violent collision and the immediate upsetting of the cab in the neighbourhood of that ancient monument Aldgate pump—since, I am informed, deceased—and the fracture of a shaft, to say nothing of my own hat (Nemesis, thought I) and poor Jabez's nose, brought us to, a little earlier than had we reached our final destination, at the corner of a certain popular thoroughfare called 'Petticoat Lane.'

Tomkins' nose was really very badly hurt; he took it, I suppose as part of the mystery, for the first words he uttered as we picked ourselves up were (to me), 'Keep it dark' (to the cabman, still prostrate with his horse, neither of which seemed to care about getting up again), 'All right.'

The man's reply was not, I thought, either a civil one or grateful. He was disentangled, however, and after some more whispering, a few expostulations, and the final payment of a coin (I learned afterwards it was a sovereign), Tomkins, with one hand to his nose, and placing

the other on my arm, once more uttered his invariable assurance that it was all right, and adding that we were close by, and must walk, pushed briskly on through the gathering mists of an April evening.

I took this opportunity, after having vainly endeavoured to straighten my hat, and sincerely condoled with him for his graver mischance (I *thought* I heard a muttered assurance that 'nothing could be better'; perhaps I was mistaken; his voice was deadened by the pocket-handkerchief he held to the lacerated feature)—I say I took this opportunity to remonstrate gently with my friend, and to beg he would give me some idea of his plan. First of all he endeavoured to put me off, next he upbraided me with ingratitude—'Had I not put the matter into his hands?'

It was not in human nature to withstand an appeal of this kind, made by a friend who had just suffered in the cause of friendship, and who rather 'snuffed' in consequence. However, at last I learned, not with unmixed feelings, that on each occasion of his alighting he had either run into the nearest police station, or else imparted to the officer on his beat the nature of my loss—errand, rather—with a general description of my unfortunate hat.

I must have been mad, you say, for such a trifling matter to go on such a fool's errand. Well, a good many others thought so at the time, cabby amongst the rest. But, not to anticipate, we continued our walk till we arrived at a certain massive stone of the obelisk order, on which I had ample time to observe, by the light of a flickering gas-jet in a shop hard by, the arms of the City of London. I say that I had ample time for making this

observation, which is quite true, because Tomkins, in a voice which the fog and the extemporised bandage of his kerchief rendered more than ever mysterious, and rather hoarse, whispered me that we must wait there a little while, which we did. In fact, we waited so long that at last, without a word of explanation, Tomkins, simply saying, 'Back directly,' at once plunged down the afore-mentioned thoroughfare.

Now, I will confess that this conduct on the part of my friend annoyed me. Besides, the evening was raw and chilly, and the April mist was depressing. I could forgive Tomkins much, especially as his nose, the bridge of which being broken I could not well get over,\* had been fractured in my behalf; but my conscience was ill at ease, and my own nose was getting cold in the extreme, and what with a feeling that, whatever cause I might have had for my original annoyance, I had acted brutally at home, and that ever since, with the powerful aid of Jabez, I had been making an ass of myself, I resolved, after waiting some time to give Tomkins five minutes more, and then wait no longer. The truce having expired, I exclaimed aloud, and no doubt rather hastily and testily, 'Well, it's time for me to be off,' placing at the same time my hand on the spot which my watch and chain habitually graced. Simultaneously with my discovering that both watch and appendage had vanished, and the uttering of the same intemperate polysyllable which had already once before disgraced my lips, I felt a firm hand placed on my shoulder. At this moment Tomkins came up out of breath.

I was in no mood for laughter, as may be supposed, but really

\* *Suum cuique.* This pun belongs, I believe, originally to Foote, the actor.

my poor friend's appearance was something so very peculiar (nothing offensive in that word), so very different from his ordinary neat, cleanly, and rather prim aspect, that, in spite of the dense air of provoking mysteries by which I felt myself bewildered, I couldn't help laughing a little. 'Good gracious, Jabez,' I exclaimed, 'what on earth have you been doing?'

It wasn't only that his nose was comically awry, and that his face was smeared with blood and his hat battered down, but he seemed to have undergone as complete a metamorphosis as Daphne did, poor nymph, when changed into a laurel or a gooseberry bush, or whatever it was. All his clothes were changed, and he looked as veritable a vagabond as any denizen of 'the lane' from which he had emerged.

Any further conversation on our part was put an end to for the present by the gentleman whose hand was still on my shoulder asking in a quiet voice of a bystander, 'Is this the other party?' and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, at once adding, 'Well, then let us be going; you look to him, I'll take charge of his' (I thought he said 'mad') 'friend.' He then whistled, and to my exceeding disgust, who should drive up to the curb in answer to this summons but our old friend the cabman, who grinned the while, opened the cab door, and stood by enjoying the fun evidently.

'Get in,' said my new friend.

'Get in! Get in where? and who the devil are you?'

'Oh, it's all right, I am going to take you to your friends; don't alarm yourself, it's all right.'

On hearing the well-known shibboleth, I naturally turned to Tomkins for an assurance that this was, although highly mysterious, at least true. For the

first time during the evening, I found, from the lachrymose, crest-fallen expression which rode uppermost above all his lacerated lineaments, that it was in reality all *wrong*. I saw, in short, that I must be my own champion.

'May I ask you to have the goodness to explain what all this means,' said I, in as imposing a voice as I could muster, to the man who seemed so resolved to accompany me.

'Oh, certainly;' and then, dropping his voice, and in a coaxing tone, as if addressing a fretful child, he said, 'we have found your hat; it's in the cab. Do come along, they'll be anxious.'

It was evidently no time to remonstrate. A crowd of small, dirty, grinning *gamins* was already gathering; and, piously devoting my old hat to the deuce, I

'Did,  
'I knew not wherefore, that which I  
was bid.'

I entered first, Tomkins next, and the two men immediately followed, when the treacherous Jehu at once slammed the door, and mounting his box, drove off at such speed that I conjectured, rightly enough, he was driving another horse, and for the matter of that another cab too.

We hadn't far to go. I had scarcely shaped my thoughts into words when the cab stopped beneath a gas-lamp, and we all descended. A moment more confirmed my worst fears: we were being conveyed to a police station, and our companions were in reality detectives.

'A neat kettle of fish, this,' I thought, the ludicrous side of the whole transaction (as I had nothing to fear) thrusting itself on me. Remember, both our hats were battered, Tomkins was tricked out in Seven-dials fashion, or, to

speak more correctly, Whitechapel costume; in addition to which his facial aspect was that of one fresh from a pugilistic encounter.

We were allowed to sit down—a good sign, I thought—and I noticed that while my own particular detective was engaged in giving details, no doubt of 'information he had received,' and so forth, the inspector from time to time looked at us with a rather comical expression. These stern functionaries do not, as a rule, indulge much in laughter, at least during business hours. I thought, however, that he would much have liked to engage in that forbidden pastime. At length, when a little transaction was quite completed on which 'the office' had been engaged, I ventured to address *M. le president*.

'When you are quite at leisure, sir, I should be glad'—this I thought was a sarcastic way of putting it—'to be informed as to the reason of the quiet little drive and charming companionship' (bowing to my captor) 'we have just been enjoying.'

'Do you allude to your drive from Hammersmith?'

'No, not exactly; only the supplementary portion of it.'

'For a very good and kind reason I do assure you.'

'But I don't want any assurance; I demand to know as a right on what charge I and my friend have been brought and are detained in this place against our will. Perhaps you think I am drunk.'

'Oh no, certainly not—not drunk.'

'Mad perhaps'—this I said as a bitter jest. There was no jest in his reply, though, which was grave enough in all conscience.

'Well, we won't say you are mad; let it satisfy you that you are brought here to be taken care

of; and if you will only be quiet, your detention will be of very short duration. Your friends have been communicated with——'

'Who dares make,' I asked in a tremendous rage, 'any charge so preposterous as your behaviour implies?'

'I do, guvner, I do. It's all right. Keep it dark,' said a husky voice in the background. 'It's me, Sam Hall, as druv yo. I told the detective as I'd been and taken up two escaped lunatics as smashed my cab——'

'What!' I roared. 'This is too monstrous. Do you mean to say that you intend detaining us here, Mr. Inspector, at the instance of this drunken ruffian? I insist on leaving this vile place at once.'

'Well, and so you shall, only do be patient. You would hardly like to promenade the streets with your friend with that masquerade costume and prize-fighter's face.'

This was a poser. I certainly should not.

'At any rate,' I said, trying to turn the enemy's flank, 'here is my card, and—eh, what?'

'Well, what is the matter now?' asked the inspector, evidently glad of anything that would prolong the conversation peacefully till a given time.

*This was the matter.* On feeling in my pocket for my card-case, not only was there nothing of the kind, but my pocket contained not one single vestige either of purse or any portable property whatever. As to poor Tomkins, he had been stripped (literally) and robbed of the very handkerchief with which he was protecting and concealing his dishonoured features.

'I have been robbed of my watch, chain, purse, and everything I had about me,' I said; 'that is what is the matter; and my friend——'

'Your friend has apparently



been robbing some one else,' broke in the great man, with a humorous glance at Tomkins' garments.

'Not at all,' said that downcast ally; 'it was an exchange, and exchange is no robbery.'

'Ah, I see; and so you gave up a good suit, no doubt, for those rags—that was not a very sane act, was it?'

'You mean to say I am mad, too.'

'Oh dear, no. Pray don't excite yourself, there is no harm intended you, young gentlemen; on the contrary, you are evidently incapable of taking care of yourselves, and'—in a very decided voice—'from sworn information laid against or concerning you, I should not be doing my duty either to yourselves or any one else if I allowed you to go without some responsible friend to take care of you; we should have you naked next, and then matters would be worse still.'

'And about my property?'

'Ha! let us hear about your property. Richards, take a description of the gentlemen's missing effects. Wasn't there something about a hat?' he added, maliciously glancing at our vile, battered head-gear.

'Hat! of course! there was!' broke in Tomkins, with an air of triumph. 'Why, the whole mystery lies in a hat. It is for that I have—Hulloa! but where is it? I had it in the cab.'

'Had it; had what?' I asked somewhat testily.

'Why, confound it all, the object of our search.'

'That can't be, because my detective has it—at least he told me so—'

We were engaged in this acrimonious squabble when another active and intelligent officer made his appearance—they had only just changed the beats—and then

another, and again yet another, and, to my bewilderment and annoyance, every man of them brought in a diabolical-looking old *chapeau*, which would have disgraced a cow-keeper. Tomkins had contrived so well, what with his mystery and his keeping the matter dark, that he had convinced every policeman individually that we were both, if not raving madmen, at least in an advanced stage of idiocy or imbecility, and that any old tile would suffice to obtain the reward which he had munificently promised on its recovery.

When I looked round, and beheld all this grove of hats, each more villainous-looking than the other, and all assembled, so to speak, in my honour, I began to have a faint suspicion that the inspector and the cabman and the detectives were right, and that I was really mad. As for Tomkins, I was certain about him; Colney Hatch or Hanwell was his proper abode, there could be no doubt of it.

And the worst of it was that with every newly-relieved officer and every 'fresh' hat a wider grin distorted the features of all present, until, on the arrival of five more men in a bunch, each with a separate hat, a roar of laughter shook the abominable stone walls and roof to their foundation.

No doubt I looked mad. I felt so; and when the newcomers turned from my glaring eyes to Tomkins' confounded toggery, which they hadn't seen before, the brutes stood and laughed till their sides shook and the tears ran down their eyes. Even the inspector was past holding in.

It was at this supreme moment that the 'outer guard' appeared, ushering in 'a lady.' *She* too carried a hat (in whitey-brown paper). I had no time for in-

specting that though, for in one moment, with a passionate cry, my darling Araminta threw herself into my arms, and while reproaching, and sobbing, and weeping, and laughing, put the finish to the *tableau vivant*, and at the same time fortunately put an end to the guffawing of those detestable guardians of the peace—most of whom, doubtless thinking that their little game was now useless, incontinently abasquated.

It was the presence of a lady, no doubt too, which also restored the inspector to something like his accustomed gravity of demeanour. Addressing my dear spouse, he said:

'I presume, madam, that this gentleman'—pointing to me—'is your husband.'

'Of course he is. Every one knows that.'

'Every one of your neighbours, you mean. You will excuse me asking you if—if, in short, he is—in fact, quite right in his head?'

'I don't understand you.'

'The man who drove him and his friend from—from Hammer-smith, has sworn that they are both escaped lunatics——'

'Oh, the wicked wretch! Why, he has been home to dinner every day since we were married, three years next Wednesday.'

'What have you to say to that? Come forward, sir.'

'Why,' answered that treacherous driver of ours, 'I only judged by the owdacious way they was agoin' on. What with what t'other one told me about an old 'at, and keeping of it dark, and the rest of it—Just look at him; if he ain't mad, all I can say he oughter be.' And truly there was in my poor friend's outward man a very insane appearance.

The inspector, too, whose doubts as to my sanity seemed to have been dispelled, evidently, on look-

ing at Tomkins, was once more shaken in his opinion. He was silent for a few moments, and then, addressing my wife, said:

'You see, these gentlemen have, to say the least, been acting in a rather mysterious manner, and I can scarcely be surprised at the impression they have left on more minds than one. They have only themselves to blame for any unpleasant consequences. I will just ask—Mr.—Mr. Tomkins, I think—a question or two. Pray, sir, what was your real object in driving, of all places on earth, to Petticoat Lane at this time of the evening?'

'Why, I had always heard that all property in the shape of second-hand clothes, &c., was sure to turn up there, and as my friend had—hem!—by mistake parted with a——'

'Yes, a hat; we know all about the hat. Be brief, if you please.'

'I thought it best to go to headquarters.'

'And you laid an information with every officer and at every police-station on your way.'

'Why, good gracious!' suddenly exclaimed my wife, 'if you had only waited, George, I could have saved you and your friend'—an emphasis on 'friend'—'a journey: that troublesome old hat of yours was only just round the corner at poor Smithson's. There was no difficulty or mystery at all about it. Directly you were gone I sent Mary round for it, and she bought it back for a shilling. Here it is. Petticoat Lane, indeed!'

The dear creature was getting strong from the superior position she was placed in, and of course was inclined to abuse her power: they are all like that.

'Very well, then; that part of the business—certainly rather a crazy one—being happily disposed of, may I venture to ask of your

discreet friend how he comes to appear in a costume not quite becoming a gentleman, and with a face as if he had been engaged in a pitched battle?'

The broken nose was readily accounted for, but it was with considerable reluctance that, bit by bit, poor Jabez had to humiliate himself by the confession that he had been persuaded by 'a party in the lane' that he would stand no chance of recovering the missing article—or of 'solving the mystery,' as he still insisted on calling it—till he was dressed like—in fact, like a prig, himself.

'And so you made the rather unprofitable exchange for those rags of, no doubt, a respectable suit of clothes.'

It was only too true; and by the crest-fallen appearance of poor Tomkins all seemed to judge that he had suffered ample punishment for his prying into the mysterious.

'Well, if you will give your names and addresses, I do not think, in spite of very unfavourable appearances, that I need detain you. An officer will call upon you to-morrow with reference to your watches and other missing articles. Perhaps,' he added, with a smile, 'if less mysterious in our proceedings, we may be more successful. Standing, get the lady a cab.'

'I've got mine outside,' shouted the unabashed Jehu.

'No. I have a word to say to you, cabman. Good evening, madam; take care, pray, of your friends.'

And with this parting shot the inspector was pleased to dismiss us.

As my poor friend was evidently in great pain, my dear wife's woman's heart was moved to compassion, in spite of her

private opinion of his bad behaviour, and nothing would satisfy her but that he should be our guest till the following morning. We supped off my dinner, *plus* a lobster, and over a comfortable glass, and by the side of a cheerful fire, late as was the hour, contrived to extract a little merriment even out of our own follies. Nor was it till the second glass was well 'entered' that, I brought in the *terribile causa* of all our woes, and, carefully cutting open the lining, produced, by way of accounting for and extenuating my anxiety about its loss, a roll of 'documents,' whose intrinsic value made both my wife and friend open their eyes in amazement.

'Well, all I can say is,' said 'my little woman,' 'if you were not mad to try to recover your hat, you were certainly crazed to stow away in such a hiding-place valuable papers and money you could not afford to lose, sir.'

'Ah, *there* indeed is a mystery. Do you remember, my dear, a certain boating accident, when a certain saucy little lady had to be fished out of the sea like a bunch of damp sea-weed?'

'Oh, George, dearest, don't, don't talk of it. Can I ever forget your bravery, and how you swam out so far—and it was then—'

'I transferred from pockets which I anticipated might become moist, to the despised old hat which I bore high and dry, what in fact I had, odd as it may appear, forgotten all about until you mentioned that you had kindly disposed of for—well a trifle—certain papers, stamped, signed, and so forth, the loss of which made us two simpletons act in a manner as if we were really "Mad as a Hatter."'

J. MONTAGU SIMS.



Drawn by R. Caldecott.

PAIRING-TIME.

## OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'  
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

'I WILL FIND IT—IF IT IS TO BE FOUND.'

'COME in,' says Dr. Newall, as he takes Lady Valence gently by the hand, and draws her in front of the little fire. 'Come in, and tell us all about it.'

But with her animated speech the Countess's courage seems to have evaporated; and as she stands between the two men, whose eyes are turned inquiringly towards her, she looks more ready to weep than to declaim.

'Oh! what is there to tell!' she says despairingly; 'it is the old, old story—Valence is dying by inches. I had hoped so much from our visit to Mentone, Doctor. He seemed so different there: so young, and buoyant, and hopeful. But it is all gone again. The curse fell on him directly he re-entered the doors of Castle Valence, and I hardly recognise him for the same creature.'

'Has he resumed his midnight studies?' asks Dr. Newall.

'He has resumed everything that is most hurtful to his health; late hours, secret sittings, mysterious absences: and, above all, those fatal trances have again attacked him. He was in one—so he tells me, and from his appearance I can well believe it—for three hours last night. Sometimes he does not come to bed at all, and the morning finds him in that wretched library, with his pulse down to the very lowest ebb, and almost unconscious of what is passing around him. Oh! Dr. Newall, if this goes on much longer, he will really die!'

'I know it, Lady Valence.'

'But it must not be—it *shall* not be. Just now, too, when all life holds that is best and fairest is opening before his view.'

Here she stops and blushes vividly, remembering that she is alluding to that of which one at least of her listeners knows nothing.

'Forgive me, Mr. Bulwer. I hardly know of what I am speaking. If you only knew what I suffer, you would feel for me!'

'I do feel for you, Lady Valence, keenly. Dr. Newall will tell you that we were discussing this very subject, and the possibility of a cure, when you arrived.'

'And what did you say?' she demands, turning to the old man.

'I could only repeat, my dear, what I have said to you before: this disease lies in the brain. Distract the Earl's mind, disabuse his fancy, prove his imagination to have been a lie, and you will cure him—*perhaps*. Mind! I only say *perhaps*!'

'You think him *mad*?' she says in a low voice.

'Not hereditarily so, my Lady—not physically so, if I may use the expression. But that his abnormal studies have produced a temporary disturbance of the cerebral organisation, I have no doubt. Nothing else could account for the Earl's behaviour.'

'*Mad*!' repeats Lady Valence musingly. '*Mad*! good God! How horrible! And yet, had you

seen him just now as he rushed into my arms, pale and trembling, his dear brow bathed in a cold perspiration, and heard the loud beating of his heart as he told me that the brief interval of happiness we have enjoyed was but a diabolical delusion to make the death to which he is hastening more terrible to contemplate, you would indeed have said that he looked mad. He clutched me—poor darling—as though a weak, shaking thing as I am could be his support. And the pain in his eyes—the dreadful sense of pain stamped upon every line of his countenance—shall I ever forget it? It was this that made me come to you this evening, Dr. Newall; that made me feel that by some means or other an end must be put to this awful superstition. Oh! do not tell me that he is mad—that there is no hope for him!

'Heaven forbid that I should say so, my dear lady. When I call the Earl insane, I do so advisedly. The derangement would doubtless be but temporary, if the way of cure could be found. But how to find it, that's the question. How to find it!'

'I will find it—if it is to be found,' she answers grandly. 'No! don't look at me as if I were taking more on myself than I have any right to do. I have made a vow to heaven that, if need be, I will sacrifice my life itself to cure my husband, and I mean to keep to it. I know I am only a woman, and a very inexperienced and ignorant woman; but I love him, Mr. Bulwer, and I feel ready to defy all things, natural or supernatural, for his sake.'

'God bless you! I believe you would!' cries the young man, as he looks at her with unqualified admiration; 'and with the whole power of my strength I would assist you.'

'Will you work with me?' she retorts eagerly. 'Shall we penetrate this haunted room together, and drag all its hidden mysteries to light?'

'I will follow you, if need be, to the jaws of death itself. What do you suppose I would *not* do in Valence's cause?—he who is my best and earliest friend!'

'If we could but argue him out of his belief in the reality of these apparitions—'

'If we could but prove to him, beyond a doubt, that they are but the creations of his own diseased imagination—'

'Stop, my children! not so fast!' interposes Dr. Newall. 'You are reckoning without your host. Your proposals will not hold water. How can you reason a man out of the evidence of his own senses? Have you forgotten the midnight vigil you held with your husband, Lady Valence, and what you saw and heard during its continuance?'

Everil shudders and turns pale.

'Ah! no! How foolish I am! It is too real, too terrible a thing to be argued about. But what is to be done, then? Will he always believe in and follow them?'

'To believe is not necessarily to follow, Lady Valence. I believe in the possibility of supernatural visitations, and yet they never trouble me. No! your husband's researches have gone too far for that. Were you and my impetuous young friend here to rush pell-mell into the secret recesses of his heart, and strive to overthrow what is enshrined there as his most sacred belief, you would do no good whatever. You would only shock his sensibility, destroy his confidence in you, and leave him more closely wedded to his own opinions. His delusion is not that *such things are*. It lies in the trust he places in them



and their communications as being sent from heaven. If we can once prove to him that spirits are fallible, that their prophecies can be false, and even their supposed identity a lie, the cure would be effected. Lord Valence would not have the witness of his own senses turned against himself, but he would learn how little in the way of spiritual revelation is worthy our attention beside that which has been committed in trust for us to the keeping of the Church.'

'But how can we do this, Dr. Newall?'

'I have been pondering the subject very carefully, and I can see but one way to it. When I have made you acquainted with the theory of my plan it will be for your Ladyship to decide whether it is practical. Lord Valence fully believes he is to leave this world on the third of February, does he not?'

'On the third of February, at noon. And he constantly alludes to it, Dr. Newall, as a settled thing. Sometimes he wakes up suddenly in the night and thinks the time has come, and throws his arms about me to say farewell. And when I try to reason him out of the idea, he tells me it is of no use; that his fate has been determined since his birth, and that he feels the tide of life ebbing slower and slower with him every day. And, indeed, sometimes his pulse is scarcely perceptible. I cannot tell you how I tremble as the days go on.'

'You must leave off trembling now, Lady Valence, like a brave woman, as I know you can be, and take to acting instead. By fair means or foul, your husband must be beguiled into passing over the third of February without noticing the date.'

'But is that possible?'

'The possibility I leave to you.

You have a woman's ready wit, and must bring it all to your assistance now. If you can persuade the Earl by any means to live over the third of February without knowing it, his life is saved. He will see then the impotency of the prophecy in which he has placed so much trust, and I will guarantee his own good sense, which has been blinded by this infatuation, will prevent his ever placing faith in such revelations again.'

'To make him pass over the third of February without noticing it,' repeats the Countess, thoughtfully; 'but how to delude him? By what means to divert his observation?'

'You must work upon his feelings,' replies the doctor, decidedly. 'Bigoted as he is to this fatal belief, his Lordship must surely possess some of the feelings of a man. There are a thousand things that should be able to distract his attention from himself; your health for instance.'

'Oh, that I could die for him!' she exclaims suddenly.

'Valence would, scarcely care to purchase his life at such a sacrifice,' says Bulwer.

'Do you not think so? That thought would make it all the easier. But we must not talk, Mr. Bulwer! we must think—think—think! Dr. Newall's suggestion has been like a ray of light to me, and at all hazards I am resolved I will succeed.'

'Depend upon my aid in any way that is in my power, Lady Valence, even to risking a rupture of the long-tried friendship between your husband and myself.'

'As I would risk his love for me! Oh! I see we shall be true allies, Mr. Bulwer, and I thank you for it.'

She holds out her delicate hand as she speaks, and permits him to clasp it firmly.

'Yet if we should fail!' she continues, breaking down, 'if we should fail!'

The Joan of Arc spirit has departed again. She is once more a woman, and the two men hasten to exert their privilege of protection and consolation.

'We will not fail,' says Bulwer, confidently. 'Newall and I will put our heads together, Lady Valence, and take no rest until we have hit on some expedient that appears possible.'

'And meanwhile, my dear young lady, you will consider too, and you will not forget to pray for our success; and between us three, we are sure to find some way out of this apparent labyrinth of difficulty.'

'The third of February, and this is the tenth of January! It is so short a time,' she says mournfully.

'No time is too short for God,' is the old man's reply.

'Then I will go now, lest he should discover and be angry at my absence; and you two will consult together, and let me know everything in the morning. How can I thank you enough,' she says sweetly, as she turns and smiles upon them through her tears.

'We will not take your thanks till we have earned them,' replies Bulwer. 'But you must not return to the Castle alone, Lady Valence. Let me see you through the grounds.'

'No! I would rather not! Some one might meet us, you know, and it would look so strange.'

She says this half laughing, and touching the shawl she has wrapped about her head. 'I shall not be a minute running up to the Castle. Good night, Dr. Newall; you have done me all the good in the world; you have given me hope. I shall go home and pray that a way may be opened, and it

must come—it must come!' and before they have time to reassure her, she has left the cottage and is running through the darkness in the direction of her home.

The Castle hall and corridors are always lighted, but the place is so immense that the best of lamps leave it but gloomy. No one encounters Lady Valence as she steals up the wide staircase and into her own bedroom, where a light is dimly burning; but as she closes the door behind her, a figure starts up from the shadow of the dressing-room beyond, and advances to her. It is her husband.

'Why, Valence, dearest,' she says cheerfully, 'you here, and in the dark! What have you been doing? Are you not well?'

'What have you been doing? That's more to the purpose,' he answers, almost roughly. 'And where have you been? What makes your hair so untidy, and what is this shawl upon your arm? I want to know all that.'

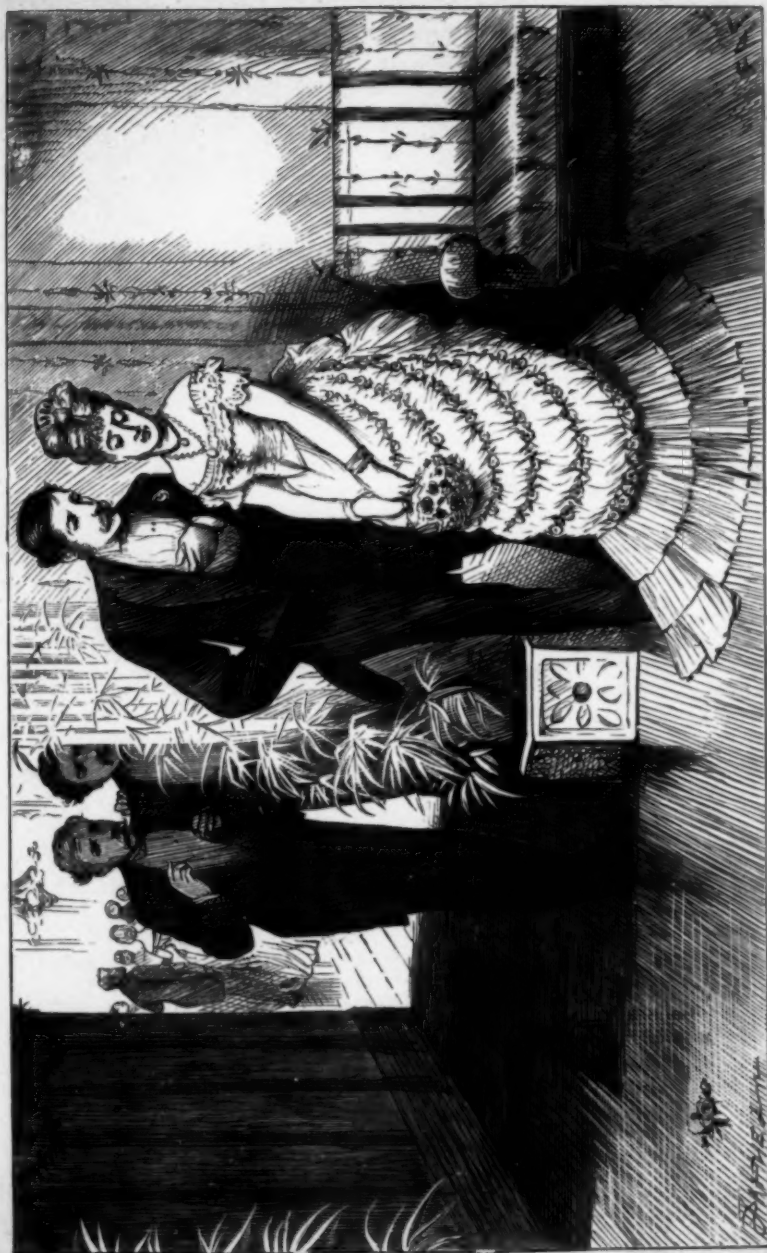
She stops for a moment confounded. To tell him she has been to Dr. Newall will be to rouse his worst suspicions and place him on his guard, and yet Everil is not the woman to tell a lie.

'I have been in the garden with this shawl about my head,' she answers, with an attempt to speak lightly. 'A stupid creature, am I not, to risk neuralgia and toothache and every sort of ill by braving the night air? But I was nervous, Valence, and excited, and I wanted to cool myself.'

'Nervous and excited! Pray what excited you?'

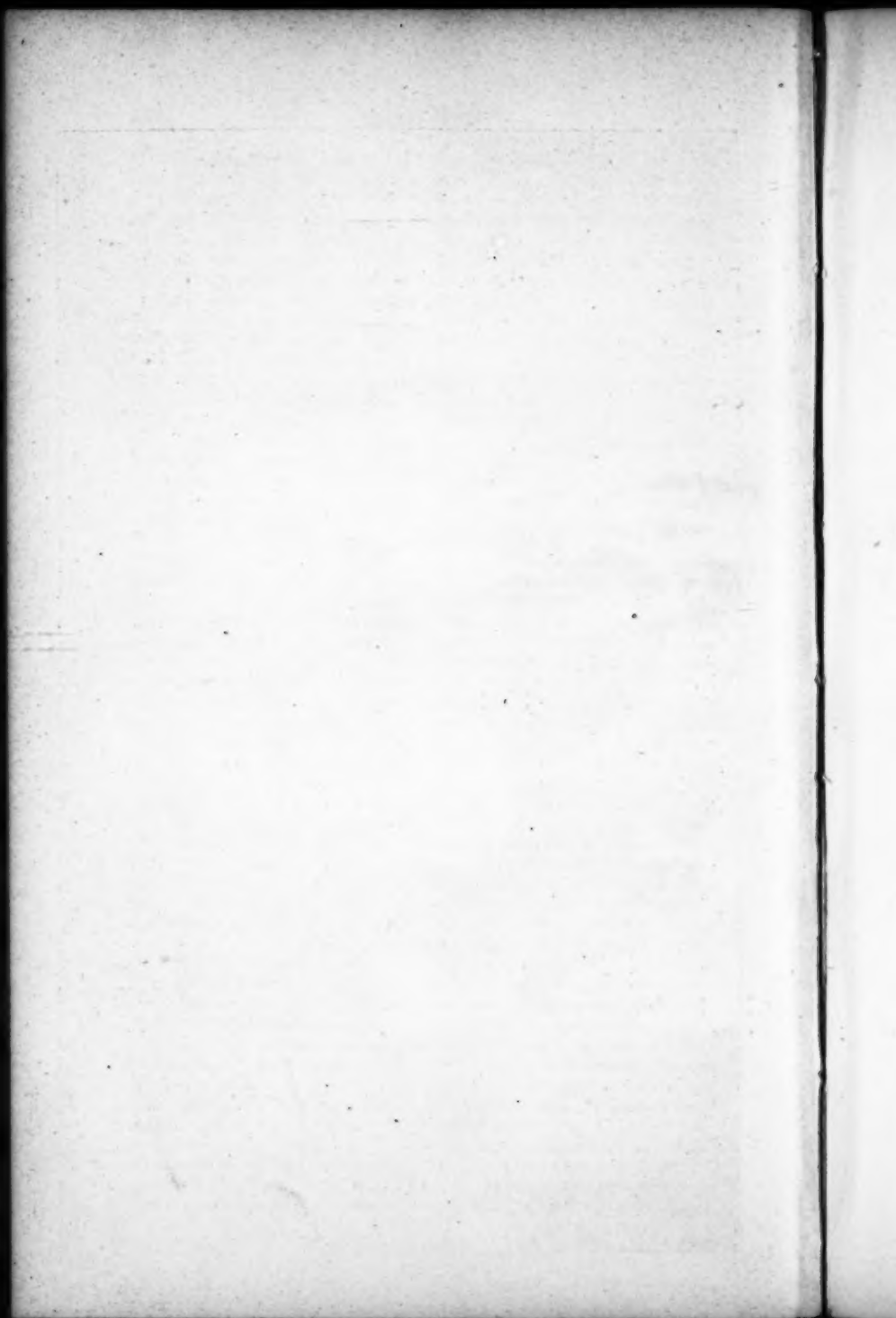
'Well, to tell you the truth, dear love, you did. How can I help feeling nervous when you speak to me as you did this evening? Not only nervous, but miserable. You forget how my life is bound up in your's, Valence.'

For a moment he seems about



Drawn by F. A. Fraser;

OPEN SESAME!



to relent, and submits to the caresses she showers upon him; but the next, a sudden remembrance strikes him, and he turns impatiently away.

'I see no reason why you should risk your health also. Did you go alone?'

'I went alone, Valence!'

'Did you come back alone?'

'Yes!'

'Did you see any one whilst you were out?'

'Why do you ask me? What can it signify?'

'Do you suppose it signifies nothing to me if you steal out in this surreptitious manner to meet any one or not? Do married ladies—hostesses—usually desert their guests to walk about their grounds after dark, with nothing but a shawl twisted about their heads, and with no object but to "cool" themselves? Answer me, now! Was this walk an assignation or not?'

She has never seen him look like this before, nor heard him speak in such a voice of anger. His cheek is flushed, his eyes are blazing; he has actually seized her by the arm. Everil's pride begins to stir.

'Of what do you accuse me?' she says loftily.

'I accuse you of nothing; I only say that it is by a strange coincidence that you and Captain Maurice Staunton (the gentleman who gave you the flowers, you may remember) should have left the house at the same moment, and remained absent for the same time, and at such an hour as this, too! strange, but true.'

He throws away her hand and ceases speaking, as though waiting for a reply. But none comes. Everil remains silent.

'Well, madam!'

'What do you expect me to say?'

'I wish you to deny the accusation I bring against you—if you can! To tell me that you have not been walking about the garden to-night with that brute Staunton.'

She is about indignantly to refute the assertion. She is about to cast her arms about her darling's neck, and entreat him to tell her who has dared to poison his mind with such an infamous falsehood concerning her faith to him, when a thought occurs to her; a voice commences ringing in her ears: '*Work on his feelings. Bigoted as he is to this fatal belief, his Lordship must surely possess some of the feelings of a man. There are a thousand things should be able to distract his attention from himself.*'

Is this one of them? Everil pauses, considers, trembles, and remains voiceless and impassive.

'You don't deny it!' continues the Earl in a low tone, full of agitation. 'You are silent, when a word from you would put an end to all my suspicions. I have watched that man closely, and I am not deceived; he cares for you! God! what will you make me believe next?'

'You must believe what you choose, Valence,' she answers in a trembling voice—the voice of the martyr who has the stake in view, yet walks up boldly to it—'I decline to refute the accusation you bring against me.'

'You refuse to satisfy my doubts! Is it wounded pride or guilt that keeps you silent, Everil?'

'You can attribute it to the motive you prefer.'

'Good heavens! that I should live to hear you speak to me like that! Do you know what you are doing? Do you know that you are causing the most violent emotion of which my nature is capable, and that I cannot answer for the consequences that may

follow such an act? I told you the other day, and I repeat it now, that if you once give me cause for jealousy, you will raise a demon you will find it difficult to quell. And yet you can stand there quietly, and tell me you decline to refute the accusation brought against you!

'No law, social or religious, compels us to refute an unjust charge.'

'You allow it is unjust then?'

'I allow nothing! I consider that I am authorised in taking a walk through my own grounds, if I so choose, at any hour of the day or night, and I deny the right of you or any one to question so simple a proceeding.'

'I do not condemn the fact of the walk, though it was imprudent. I demand only to know if you were accompanied by any one.'

'And I refuse to say.'

He looks at her for a moment without speaking; then, with a face white with mingled anger and pain, he rushes from the apartment.

Lady Valence waits until the sound of his receding footsteps has died away before she ventures to lock her door and give vent to her real feelings. Then sinking down on her knees by the bedside, she buries her face in the yielding drapery, and groans in the anguish of her spirit.

'Can I do it? Can I go through with it? Shall I live to see the completion of so terrible a task? Yet for his sake!—*for his sake!* That thought must be my watch-word, even if I die.'

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### 'APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL.'

No immediate consequences follow this outburst from the Earl. The Countess comes down smiling to

the breakfast-table the following morning; the business of the day proceeds as usual, and if Valence's brow is a little overclouded, and his manner curt and undecided, his words are too changeable to excite much observation, and no one appears the wiser for the scene which took place in the bedroom the night before. How constantly it is the case in this world! Captain Spooney is so attentive to his wife, so anxious to anticipate her wishes, so particular in calling her by names of endearment in public, that his acquaintance would not believe it possible that whenever the Captain's temper has been ruffled he vents his ill-humour by pinching Mrs. Spooney, and knocking her about, and wreaking his petty malice by a thousand contemptible denials of her food, or her money, or her pleasure. Pretty, languid Mrs. Butterfly, too, who always speaks to her husband as 'my dearest love,' and appears periodically with her hair or her dress arranged in the most unbecoming style because 'dear Edward' prefers it in that fashion, how astonished the guileless and uninitiated are when she walks off one fine summer's morning with Lieutenant Prancer, of the cavalry, and to find subsequently, when they appear in print, that the unsuspecting lieutenant is but the tail of a long list of co-respondents.

The World is not an innocent creature by any manner of means; yet the World is certainly very easily beguiled by appearances, or, rather, we should say, the World shuts its eyes determinately to that which should not be. Perhaps in the landable desire to do as it would be done by.

It is content to take things as they appear, which is, after all, the least troublesome method to pursue. The guests at Castle



Valence are content to take their host and hostess as they appear, at all events for a day or two. But after that time the change becomes more visible. The Earl's usually languid and apathetic manner has given place to a restless anxiety, which seems to render him incapable of keeping quiet. His eyes are always watching the Countess; his cheeks burn with a hectic flush; he appears to be inwardly consumed by some devouring fever.

Everil, on the contrary, grows apparently livelier day by day. Her laugh is oftener heard than it has ever been before; it is certainly harsher and louder than it used to be; but that may arise from her high spirits. She does not appear to take any notice of the Earl's changed demeanour, nor even of himself; but much affects the society of Alice Mildmay, with whom she has secret jokes that are confided to none of the rest of the company, unless it be to Maurice Staunton, who has a faculty of hanging about these two ladies, and holding whispered conversations with them, that is, on occasions when by so doing they cannot offend society.

Mr. Mildmay, who never liked Captain Staunton in the olden days, and has conceived an honest affection for his intended son-in-law, John Bulwer, watches the triumvirate with eyes of suspicion. He is not pleased at Captain Staunton's increased familiarity with his hostess; still less at his apparent intimacy with his daughter. He does not like to mention the subject to Bulwer, lest he should be the means of rousing his suspicions unnecessarily; but he unbosoms himself freely to Miss Strong, who is as cognisant of the evil as he is.

'I am an old-fashioned individual, and I may hold very anti-

quoted notions,' he says to her one day, after a luncheon, during which Everil and Alice have appeared to be entirely engrossed by Maurice Staunton's attentions, and the Earl has left the table abruptly, and without apparent cause; 'but I don't like the way in which these young people go on, Miss Strong. Everil was always wilful and headstrong—you and I know that to our cost; yet I used to think her heart was in the right place, and she knew what was due to herself as a gentlewoman; but to see the manner in which she permitted that young Staunton to go on with her to-day at the luncheon-table, it was romping, madam, positively romping; there's no other name for it. I don't wonder the Earl was annoyed. Why Captain Staunton was ever asked down here I cannot imagine. There are circumstances in the past connected with his name which should, I think, have prevented Everil from allowing him to become her guest; and to have my daughter mixed up with it all. It disturbs me greatly!'

'Oh! pray don't speak of it so seriously, Mr. Mildmay, or you will alarm me. I was as surprised as you could be to find Captain Staunton here; but dear Everil assures me he was invited by her husband, and not herself; so what could the poor child do but submit?'

'Submit! Pooh! nonsense! It's one thing to have the man staying in the Castle—though I question that as a sign of good taste—and another to flirt with him openly as she is doing now. No one could help observing it, Miss Strong! I call it scandalous, and I won't have Alice's name dragged into any such affair. If John Bulwer won't interfere, I shall.'

'Would it not be better to speak to Alice yourself? To men-

tion the subject to Mr. Bulwer will be to create an open scandal. You cannot speak of Alice without inculpating Lady Valence.'

'Yes! you are right! And your duty, Miss Strong, is to speak to the Countess.'

'To Everil! Oh, Mr. Mildmay! you do not know the task you are setting me. You may remember how ill she bore coercion even in her schoolgirl's days. What will she say if I venture to reprove her now, when I have no possible right to do so?'

'You have the right of old acquaintance and long-trying affection. You have the right of Right, which should be the strongest right of all. Speak to her plainly, Miss Strong; no half measures ever took with that girl. Ask her what Staunton is doing here; tell her what people are saying about it; urge the interests of her husband, her position, and herself, upon her; and let her do her worst afterwards if she will. Your duty is clear before you.'

'If you think I ought, I will, Mr. Mildmay; but it seems taking a great deal upon myself.'

He draws her to the window, and points across the leafless park, where, in the distance, two figures saunter close together. They are not so far off but that she can distinguish them to be the Countess and Captain Maurice Staunton.

'Look at that, and don't talk such nonsense,' he says sternly. 'You might as well say it was taking too much upon yourself to drag a would-be suicide back from the brink of the grave.'

'And when we first came here she seemed so devoted to her husband,' says Miss Strong mournfully.

'Appearances are deceitful,' replies the Rector, just as Mrs. West, muffled up to the chin in sables, with Arthur, arrayed in black

velvet, by her side, comes tripping into the room.

'Where is dear Everil?' she inquires, with one of her sweetest smiles.

'Walking in the park with Captain Staunton,' growls Mr. Mildmay. 'She appears partial to the company of that young man, Mrs. West.'

'Oh! it is so good of her, isn't it, when I know she would rather be in a dozen other places? But that is just like dear Everil! She is always sacrificing herself for other people. I say she is a perfect martyr.'

'It's a pity she confines her martyrdom so exclusively to one person, though. It would not be the less martyrdom for being divided occasionally, at least, that's my opinion.'

'Do you mean Maurice by "one person"? Does Everil martyrise herself oftener for him than her other guests? I'm so glad to hear it. She used to snub him dreadfully (he's not much of a favourite with her, you know), and he felt it very much. It is kind of her to walk with the poor fellow. He will be so proud of her condescension. I really must thank Everil, for Maurice is my guest. You know dear Lady Russell and I are such bosom friends.'

'Don't you think you could take Captain Staunton off Lady Valence's hands occasionally, then?' puts in Miss Strong, bravely. 'The Earl seemed rather put out at luncheon to-day because she could talk to no one else.'

'Has Valence been confiding his private annoyances to you?' exclaims Agatha, with wide-open eyes.

'Oh, no! of course not! The Earl and I are not on such intimate terms; only I thought—it was impossible not to observe—'

But here the old lady's elo-

quence is interrupted by Mrs. West's merry laugh.

'Dear, dear! How comical! I only wish dear Valence could hear you. What would he say!'

'I should be very much concerned if any remark I made to you in confidence *did* reach his Lordship's ears,' stammers Miss Strong, with a heightened colour.

'My dear creature! I wouldn't be the one to repeat it for the world. Why, he would bring the whole Castle down about our ears. Everil and he are the most absurd pair of turtledoves you ever came across in the whole course of your existence. They are always billing and cooing, and going on with their lovers' nonsense. And the idea of any one taking a story to Valence *against* his wife! Why, he'd kill the messenger! That's my belief.'

'I'm so glad to hear it!' quoth the duenna, with a long-drawn sigh of relief.

'The idea of your dreaming otherwise! I never heard such an absurd idea! Come, Arthur, we will go for a walk, and meet these two arch-plotters on their way home. Auntie Everil will thank me greatly for exchanging cavaliers; and I'm not sure that I shall object to the arrangement either.'

'Do you hear that?' says Miss Strong, as the little widow and her child disappear.

'Yes, I hear it; but I shall speak to Alice all the same.'

'But now I come to think of it, Mr. Mildmay, I did hear a rumour, before I came to the Castle, that Mrs. West and Captain Staunton were going to make a match of it; in which case he would become a sort of brother-in-law to our dear Everil. Don't you think we have been rather premature in our suspicions?'

'Perhaps so. I hope we may

have; but I shall speak to my Alice nevertheless,' repeats the Rector, with the dogged obstinacy inherent in his sex; 'and if you know your duty, you will do the same by Everil.'

'Oh, yes, I certainly will speak to her,' replies Miss Strong, reserving to herself the right of judgment as to what she shall speak about. The old lady is not timid, but she has no notion of burning her fingers before she knows what may be in the pie—an excellent feeling of caution, for which many of us would be the happier if our well-meaning but impertinent friends occasionally exercised it on our behalf.

\* \* \* \* \*

'You must be more cautious. The rat is beginning to make himself apparent to the senses of the household,' says Agatha West, in a whisper, to Maurice Staunton, as she meets him in the centre of one of the long corridors.

'In what way?'

'Old Mildmay and old Strong have been pumping me this afternoon. They evidently think your attentions too particular. They even went the length of hinting that Valence is annoyed by them; but I think I put *that* idea out of their venerable heads.'

'What did you say?'

'Made out that Everil and Valence are the most devoted of lovers, and that if you had a *penchant* for any one, it was my unworthy self. And I really think you must make a little love to me occasionally, my dear boy, just to keep up appearances, at any rate in their presence—unpleasant, I dare say, but useful—and a hint to Everil will set *her* mind at rest upon the matter. Not that she appears as though she required much conviction of the truth. I almost think, myself, sometimes, that she is rather too open in

showing her preference for you. How is it all going on?

'Famously! I had no idea she would come round so soon; she has been so cold and reserved towards me since her marriage—until now.'

'Oh, that was all fudge—just put on for the sake of appearances. I told you so long ago. Why, she was desperately in love with you, Staunton; and, for all that's said against the sex, women don't forget quite so easily as that. When you threw the poor girl over, I thought she would have gone mad.'

'Don't use that horrid term, "threw her over." You know the absolute necessity there was for my conduct on that occasion, and how we mutually agreed that the only thing to look forward to was—*this that is coming.*'

'True! And it seems to be coming fast enough, doesn't it? I never saw Valence look so awfully ill as he does at present. Only, for heaven's sake, be careful! There is such a thing as going too far. You don't want the mine sprung before its time, do you?'

'How do you mean?'

'What are you working for?—the hand of the widowed Countess of Valence, or ——'

'You need not finish your sentence. I know what you would say. You may scarcely believe me, Mrs. West, when I reply that I am working only to obtain the woman whom I love——'

'Good heavens! Wonders will never cease! But you know the bulk of her property is settled on herself?'

'I don't think it would make any difference to me now if it were not. I always cared for her. Time-serving as you give me credit for being, you will not deny that; and since she has been the Countess of Valence, and treated me with such superb disdain, my passion

has become almost a madness. With money or without money, at all costs, I am resolved to win her, if only to have my revenge for the disappointment she has caused me.'

'Well, you seem to be in a very fair way of accomplishing your ambition, so you need not talk so loudly as to apprise the whole Castle of your intentions. To tell you the truth, the change in Everil's behaviour towards you has amazed me; for I really thought she was beginning to care for her husband.'

'Ha! ha! ha! Poor Valence! Well, he would not enjoy her preference very long, at any rate, would he? Do you think he suspects anything?'

'I cannot say; he has not mentioned the subject to myself. But he is entirely absorbed in his own prospects, and has little time to speculate on those of other people. Besides, it was not a love-match on *his* side either, remember.'

'Hush! Some one is coming up the staircase.'

'*N'importe!* The more you and I are seen together the better, Staunton; it diverts suspicion. I have but one word more to say to you, however. Be cautious! The end cannot be far off now; and it's no use making an *esclandre* in the family for nothing.'

'I will try; but I confess Fate is becoming too much for me, and things must take their course. Good-bye. We shall meet again at dinner.'

He moves off in the opposite direction just as Mr. Mildmay comes toiling to the head of the staircase. Agatha affects to be much confused as he confronts her.

'Now, Mr. Mildmay, I call this shameful of you,' she says, with the giggle of a schoolgirl, 'coming up the stairs in that stealthy way. I vow we should have an Act of

Parliament passed to prohibit gentlemen from wearing velvet slippers in the house; they are altogether too dangerous.'

'I hope your deeds will bear the light, Mrs. West,' he answers jocosely.

'Oh, dear! I trust so; but still there are moments—I hope you didn't see who went down the other staircase, Mr. Mildmay!'

'It was Captain Staunton—was it not?'

'Oh, you dreadful old man! What eyes you have! I cannot stand being looked at in that fashion. I shall run away at once to hide my blushes.' And, suiting the action to the word, away trips the pretty Cat to her own apartment. As she reaches it her face changes.

'What on earth does Maurice intend to do?' she thinks to herself, with knitted brows; 'and Everil, too? She can never be so mad as to contemplate anything more imprudent than an indecorously early abandonment of her widow's weeds. Valence will die childless. The greater amount of her money is tied up on herself. What advantages will precipitation bring them?'

The little widow, who has spent her life in plotting and planning, is for once puzzled. She cannot understand the tactics of her friends, but she knows it is not her interest to circumvent them.

'Whatever happens,' she muses, 'nothing can prevent poor Valence's death, and my darling child's accession to the title. Thank Heaven for that!'

And the woman really does thank Heaven as she says the words. Were you to take a knife and place it in her hands, and tell her she might just as well thrust it in the Earl's heart as follow the course she is pursuing with him, she would be infinitely shocked at your pro-

posal; but she has so long contemplated his death as a fact of which the moment alone is wrapped in uncertainty; she has acted the part she acts towards him for so many months, that it has become an integral portion of her nature; and she does not appear less womanly, and benevolent, and truthful to herself than any other person who spends his existence working for a certain end in which all his hopes are centred. There have been such cases of moral self-deception before now. There are women (women far more frequently deceive themselves than men) who go on lying day after day, till their views of right and wrong get so distorted that they actually do not know when they are speaking the truth or not. It may be supposed also that some of these wretched murderesses (like Charlotte Windsor for instance) ply their hellish trade until the smothering of an infant more or less makes no great difference in their habitual slumbers; and most assuredly repeated crime, and even the repeated contemplation of crime, blunts our sensibility and deadens the warnings of our conscience to that extent that we become unfitted to judge of the enormity of sin, and of the effect it has upon our own souls and those of others.

Agatha West is in this condition. Little by little she has accustomed herself to think of and hanker after forbidden things, until no step appears to her too bold to hazard in the attainment of her object, and she can even view that saddest of all sights, a fellow-creature pulled down to the depths of iniquity, with calmness, so long as the action tends to bring about the fulfilment of her own ambition.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

'THANK GOD! IT WILL BE SOON OVER.'

A LITTLE while longer and Rumour and Suspicion are resolved into Certainty; there is no doubt at all that the Earl and Countess are no longer upon friendly terms with one another.

The very look of misery they both present (Valence continually, although he tries to hide it by a haughty bearing which but renders the fact more sadly palpable, and Everil by sudden fits of gloom, alternated by an apparently heartless gaiety), convinces the spectators of the truth of their belief.

Lord and Lady Valence do not often speak to one another before their guests, but when they do their words are of the coldest, and sometimes worse than cold. This is especially the case on one particular morning, when the subject of balls is introduced at breakfast, and Captain Staunton confesses his love for dancing, and reminds his hostess of the many pleasant evenings they have passed in that pursuit together.

'Do you suppose I have forgotten them,' she utters plaintively, 'and when they were the last opportunities I had for such enjoyment? I have never danced once since my marriage.'

'You don't mean to tell me so!'

'How could I? Haven't I been shut up in this dull old castle ever since, with hardly a neighbour within ten miles of me? If some of my old friends had not occasionally taken compassion on me, as you are doing now, I believe I should have died of sheer ennui.'

Mr. Mildmay looks across the table at her with a frown.

'What an absurd speech to hear proceeding from the mouth of a young lady who has health and

strength, and horses and carriages, and every luxury that the heart of man could wish, or his brain invent!'

'But, papa, a woman wants something at times besides the company of dogs and horses,' interposes Alice.

'Hold your tongue, miss! I didn't speak to you.'

'A married lady,' observes Miss Strong, 'should always have sufficient society in the presence of her husband.'

'How can you tell, Miss Strong?' exclaims Alice, laughing. 'You've never tried it.'

'For which you may reply, "Thank Heaven!"' responds Lady Valence sarcastically.

'To return to the subject we were discussing,' says Maurice Staunton, in his bland voice. 'You have never thought of giving a ball here, I suppose, Lady Valence?'

'No! Who would come to it?'

'Everybody, I should imagine, who lives within a reasonable distance. They would be only too glad. You really should have given a house-warming.'

'We have never been accustomed to give balls at Castle Valence,' says the Earl coldly.

'That is no reason why we should not begin,' retorts his wife.

'I consider it is every reason. I should not care to have a ball here, especially now, when my health is so indifferent. I could not stand it.'

'But I could, and you would not be called upon to take any trouble in the business. Captain Staunton, I think yours is a brilliant idea. I am quite excited about it. I wonder how soon one could contrive to get it up.'

'It would not take long, with your train of servants. The invitations are the chief things to think about.'

'Lady Valence, I beg you will



proceed no further with this idea. You are only wasting your time. The ball will not be given.'

'We will see about that,' she answers coolly. 'Don't you think a fortnight's invitation will be long enough, Captain Staunton—for the country, you know?'

Lord Valence has been set at defiance. He will not argue the point further before his guests, but, rising from the table, he murmurs some indistinct words of apology, and hastily leaves the room. Everil's head is not even turned to learn the cause of his disappearance.

The rest of the company look at one another in disapproval, and are silent and uncomfortable. Two or three tears course slowly down the bridge of Miss Strong's nose and drop on to her plate. Mr. Mildmay, grunting dissatisfaction, rises and follows the Earl's example. Agatha West crosses the room to Everil's side, and stands between her and Staunton, with a hand on the shoulder of each.

'You naughty children! You have quite vexed poor Valence with your foolish talk. Don't you see that he has left the room?'

'Foolish talk, do you call it? Wait till you see my ball, Agatha. I mean it to be the best that has ever been given in Wicklow.'

'You goose! You don't really mean to give one.'

'Don't I? Come with me to my boudoir, and help me with the invitations. I shall send them all out to-day, and fix it for the second of February. That will just give the women time enough to get their dresses ready.'

'The second of February! Valence will not be well enough to attend it, will he, Everil?'

The Countess stops suddenly, and presses her hand to her heart.

'What's the matter, dear?'

'Nothing—nothing! Only a

sudden stab. Indigestion, I'm afraid. I haven't had enough exercise lately. Never mind! dancing will take it down. What were you saying, Agatha?'

'That I'm afraid dear Valence won't be strong enough for dancing, or anything of that sort.'

'Well, he won't grudge us our pleasure, I suppose, even if he can't take part in it. At any rate, he will be able to look on. Where had we better dance, Captain Staunton—in the music-room or the saloon?'

And thereupon they fall to discussing ways and means in a manner that makes Miss Strong, remembering the despairing face with which the young Earl has just quitted them, feel quite sick.

She has not yet fulfilled the promise she made to Mr. Mildmay of speaking to her old pupil about her conduct with Captain Staunton. She has lacked courage to put her good intentions into effect; but the occurrence at the breakfast-table this morning nerves her for the task.

'Everil, my dear, may I speak to you?' she says in her old deferential style, as she looks into the Countess's boudoir a few hours later, and detects her seated at a writing-table covered with note-paper and envelopes.

'To be sure, Miss Strong. Pray come in.'

The old lady closes the door carefully behind her, and advancing slowly, seats herself with a deep sigh close to Lady Valence.

'My dear girl (you will let me call you so, I know, for the sake of old times), I have a very painful task before me. I know I have lost all right to question your actions, Everil; but—but—'

'I am quite aware of what you are going to say, Miss Strong,' replies the Countess, as she begins to make inky dots all over the

paper to cover her nervousness; 'and I wish you wouldn't say it. It will be of no use.'

'Oh, my dear child, don't say that! I thought it was all so different. But you have many blessings left, Everil, even if—if—your relations with his Lordship are not all that you anticipated—and—— Don't go against him in this matter, my dear—don't give a ball since he objects to it.'

'But why should he object to it?'

'The why and the wherefore are of no consequence; that he does so should be sufficient.'

'I don't see the matter in that light.'

'I did not think you would be so headstrong, particularly at such a moment.'

'At what moment?'

'When your husband is so ill. Nay, my dear, why should you start? Does the Earl not say so himself? and cannot every one who knows him see how visibly he has retrograded lately?'

'You think so!' exclaims the Countess, as she seizes Miss Strong by the arm.

'My dear, you *must* see it for yourself. It is too palpable. He is losing flesh and strength and vigour every day. I know Dr. Newall thinks very badly of him; and Mr. Mildmay said just now that he should not be surprised if Lord Valence did not live to see this ball on which your heart appears so greatly set. Hush, hush! my love! I did not mean to distress you like this' (for the Countess has cast herself across the writing-table, and is weeping loudly). 'Pray be calm. It may be a mistake, you know. We are all in the hands of God—only, if you would consent to humour his Lordship in this little matter——'

But Lady Valence has dried her tears as suddenly as they appeared,

and is once more sitting before her desk, calm and resolute.

'You must not ask me to revoke my decision, Miss Strong. I have passed my word there shall be a ball here, and a ball there shall be. With regard to Lord Valence's health, that is, as you remarked, in higher hands than ours, and it is impossible for us to say what will or will not be. Should he continue as he is now, I am sure he will very much enjoy this little festivity; if not, we must make the best of it. I am not in the least bit angry or offended with you, my dear old friend; but if you have nothing more to say to me than this, I am rather busy just at present, and would like to be left alone.'

'And you will not listen to me, Everil?' says Miss Strong, as she rises from her seat.

'I will not give up my ball, you old tyrant, if that is what you mean—not for all your coaxing, nor for Guardy's growls; and so you may tell him. And now I shall just run you right out of my room, and lock the door upon you.'

And, suiting the action to the word, the duenna soon finds herself in the corridor again, whilst the Countess, with clenched teeth and trembling hands, turns the key in the door. She listens anxiously till Miss Strong's footsteps are heard to descend the staircase, and then she flings herself upon the sofa in an abandonment of grief.

'Oh, my heart!—my heart!' she gasps, as she holds both hands tightly clasped above it. 'Oh, God! my heart!'

She sobs distractedly for a few moments, and then begins to moan.

'Where is he? Where is my Valence? Oh! I must see him, and put an end to this horrible deception, or I shall die.'

She rises with a sudden unconquerable longing, and, all disordered as she is, with her blurred, swollen features and bloodshot eyes, rushes headlong into the passage towards her husband's dressing-room.

He is not there.

She descends the staircase to the library, and knocks.

There is no answer.

She pushes the door open and enters the apartment.

A large fire is burning in the grate; on a sofa beside it is stretched the figure of Lord Valence, inanimate, as if in sleep.

She creeps softly to his side. His white, careworn features look deathlike in repose; his wasted hands are crossed upon his breast; his sad eyes are wide open—staring—fixed upon the opposite wall.

She knows what it is now that holds him. This is not sleep. She has seen him under this fatal influence before. He is in a trance.

With the sight all the woman's resolutions to save him *at any cost* return.

Here lies her husband—the life of her life—chained by an invisible power that robs him of all his senses and leaves him as one dead; and here is she, living and active, and with all hers pledged to rescue him, if possible, from the thrall by which he is enchained. In a moment the feeling of weakness that brought her to that library has passed: she is once more ready to sacrifice herself, and all that she holds most dear, for his sake; and she kneels down by his side and renews the vow.

Very tenderly she passes her arm beneath his head and places it upon her bosom; then, with her warm lips pressed to his unconscious mouth, she calls

Heaven to witness she will be faithful to her resolution.

'My love!' she whispers as she kisses his thin hands, which are locked together rigid as sculptured marble; 'my own dear love! I will die for you, or with you. And then, in that other world, for striving to look into which we shall both have paid so dearly, you will read all my motives, and my hope and my affection, and not judge me too harshly for the dubious paths by which I strove to attain my end.'

She lays his head again upon the sofa-cushion, and, rising, leaves the apartment as quietly as she entered it. On the threshold she turns and looks back upon him.

'If he only knew,' she murmurs, with streaming eyes—'but he will never know until his spirit is entirely free—*how much I love him!* I have no words in which to tell it him. I can only give him everything that I possess—even to his own esteem—and trust the means will be forgiven for the end.'

And when Lord Valence recovers his senses the library is still and empty; but from the farther end of the vast hall, where his wife and Alice Mildmay are playing battledore and shuttlecock with Maurice Staunton and John Bulwer, comes the sound of merry voices, which recalls him entirely to himself. He rises slowly, with a confused consciousness of what has befallen him, and unlocks his stiffened hands. As they touch one another he feels that they are wet, and raises them to his eyes with surprise.

Yes, he is not mistaken. His hands are wet; wet, as though with tears.

'Can spirits weep?' he thinks sadly as he regards them. 'I think not; yet, were it possible, I am a sight they might well weep over.'

At that moment another merry peal of laughter comes ringing from the hall.

Lord Valence hears it, and sighs.

'Thank God! it will soon be over,' he says, as he throws himself face downward on the sofa-cushion again. 'Thank God!—thank God!'

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

'I WILL GO THROUGH WITH IT  
TO THE END.'

A FORTNIGHT later, and Castle Valence is lighted up as for a great festivity. No one, to see the old place now, would think that its young master was fast dying. Yet such is the case. Lights flash from every window; the moat and drawbridge are illuminated by coloured lamps; the halls and staircases have been transformed into temporary hot-houses; the ballroom is almost as full as it can hold of diaphanous dresses and tail-coats; yet Lord Valence lies on the library sofa gasping for every breath he draws. He is in no pain; he is in no fear; he says he wants for nothing; but he lies there, growing weaker every minute, and counting the hours till the moment shall arrive to set him free. Dr. Newall has been to see him, and they have had a long and interesting conversation together; but the Doctor can do him no good, and he has gone home again, with a promise to return later in the evening. Indeed, his intention is—though this he keeps to himself—to pass the night at the Castle.

Lord Valence's personal attendant is moving noiselessly about the apartment, but his restlessness disturbs his master, and he tells him to leave the room.

'But should your Lordship require anything——'

'I can ring for you, Johnson. But I want nothing, thank you—nothing, except rest.'

'Which you would get better in bed, dear Valence, surely, than lying on the sofa.'

'Agatha! You here! What does this mean?'

'My dear Valence, do you suppose I could go and jump about at a ball whilst you are so ill? I have put on a ball dress in order to keep Everil in countenance, but I never intended to join the dancers. On this day, too, of all days in the year. What do you think I am made of?'

'It is very kind of you. It is like yourself. But what good can you do by the sacrifice? Better leave me to my silent communion with those who wait for me to accompany me hence.'

'Oh, Valence! do not speak in this manner. I cannot believe it even yet.'

'You will believe it to-morrow—at noon. All my cares and troubles will be over then. Oh, Agatha! I could die easily if it were not for one thought.'

'Which thought, dear Valence?'

'That I leave her to him! If he had only been some man I liked and trusted—like Bulwer, for instance—I could have borne my own disappointment bravely; but he will make her wretched, Agatha. He will break the poor girl's heart.'

'And serve her right too! No, Valence, I must speak out. Everil has behaved shamefully to you. She is not worthy of a thought.'

'Hush! you must not say that, even now! I have had a fearful blow, Agatha! I made so sure (I suppose it grew out of my own vanity and self-deception), but I made so sure she had begun to love me! She told me so, you

know; I should not have presumed to believe it, otherwise.'

'And yet Isola has always spoken the truth about her.'

'I see that now, but it was so sweet—so very sweet—to think she cared for me! For I love her, Agatha; I love her with my whole heart and soul.'

'What, still?'

'Still! I should not be able to help loving her if she cursed me to my face. And she has never done that, poor child; she has never done that! She has only gone back to the old love, as you now tell me that he is.'

'On her authority remember, Valence. Had I known it at the time of your marriage, I should of course have told you.'

'Never mind that now. It is nearly past and done with. She has her own money, and I hope she will be happy. And for the rest, for my poor little fortune, that must go with the title to your child. May he prove a better and a happier Earl of Valence than I have done—'

'Oh! my dear brother,' says the widow, weeping. 'However Everil could be so base—'

'Hush! here is Bulwer! Well, old chum! have you cut the dancing too, like my good sister here, in order to sit with a dull fellow like me?'

'I never went in much for that kind of thing, you know, Valence, and should not have joined them at all except to please Alice. Mrs. West! if you will permit me I will take your place now for a little while, and you can go and see how the ball gets on.'

'Oh! don't talk of balls to me, Mr. Bulwer. The very thought of it makes me sick. Yet, if you wish to talk to dear Valence—'

'I think it would be as well that Lady Valence had your presence, Mrs. West.'

'Yes! go to Everil,' pleads the Earl. 'She is so young, so lovely. Don't let people talk about her. There will be time enough for that afterwards—afterwards.'

'An excellent woman,' he continues as Agatha sidles out of the library; 'a good mother and a good friend. What should I have done without her, Bulwer?'

'Humph!' ejaculates Bulwer shortly.

'I know you never liked her, but I think you have misjudged her, Bulwer. She has been faithful to me, you see, to the last.'

'Exactly so!'

'The subject does not please you. We will turn to another, Bulwer. I am so glad to have these few moments of quiet conversation. I wanted to speak to you, to ask you to befriend Lady Valence when I am gone.'

'Will she need my friendship?'

'I am afraid so. I distrust that man.'

'What man?'

'Maurice Staunton! Cannot you see there is a secret understanding between them? Do you not foresee what will happen when I, the obstacle to their happiness, am removed?'

'You must be mistaken!' cries Bulwer; 'this is the madness of jealousy, Valence.'

But this remark only makes the Earl eager to prove his assertion.

'I tell you, Bulwer, it is the case. She told me long ago, poor child, that she had had a previous attachment, though she mentioned no name; and I remember now how averse she was to Staunton becoming domiciled here. But I thought it was Agatha whom he came after.'

'And how do you know now that it is not Mrs. West?'

'I know it on her own assertion (poor Agatha! it must be a disappointment to her too, for I think

she liked the man), and from Everil's conduct. Is not her preference for him patent to the world? Has not this very ball been given at his instigation, though I am dying?

'I certainly have observed that they are very friendly with each other, but more than that I could not believe; that is,' continues Bulwer correcting himself, 'unless I saw it with my own eyes.'

'I will show it you, then,' says the Earl, with feverish impatience, as he rises from his couch; 'we will go into the music saloon, and watch the promenaders from behind the flowers. You shall see how she can look at that man when she thinks my gaze is not upon her.'

'Valence! you are quite unfit to go through the corridors.'

'I am determined to go. Hark! They are dancing now. The way is clear! If we meet anybody it will but be thought I am on my way to my bedroom.'

He stands on his feet as he speaks, and, trembling with weakness and emotion, places one burning hand on Bulwer's arm and draws him from the library.

The music saloon juts upon the ball-room. It is filled with couches for the convenience of the tired dancers, and potted shrubs, behind one of which the men ensconce themselves in shadow.

They have not to wait there long. Even as they take their places, two figures come sauntering from the farther end, and stand together just in front of them, conversing.

'How beautiful you look to-night, my dearest,' exclaims the man. 'This is the first opportunity I have had of telling you so. You will not retract your promise, Everil? You will not fail me?'

'I will go through with it to the end,' she answers firmly.

'I was sure you would! You are not a woman to take back your plighted word. How can I thank you sufficiently?'

'Do not thank me at all—till afterwards.'

'Afterwards my whole life will be dedicated to your service. How short-sighted we are! Did we ever think things would turn out as they have done?'

'Hush! I heard a rustle near that screen; come down to the other end of the saloon.'

They move slowly away, walking a little apart, but as they gain the farther end, he places his hand familiarly upon her arm, and she—she permits it.

Valence gives a deep groan and turns away.

'Come back to the library, Bulwer, for God's sake!' he says in a faint voice of pain.

(To be continued.)





## HOW THE WORLD WAGS.

APRIL, IN COUNTRY AND TOWN—THINGS THEATRICAL: SHAKESPEARE IN THE ASCENDANT—THE COMING OPERA SEASON.

SPRING'S delights are all reviving, although the poet has insinuated that 'blythe May-day' is the proper season to remark on the circumstances. April, however, can afford to dispense with this portion of the credit due to it; for surely there is no month in the year which the poets, from Chaucer downwards, have more delighted to honour. Does not brave old Geoffrey absolutely begin his work with a psalm in its praise?

'Whanne that April with his shoures sote

The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,

And bathed every veine in swiche licour,

Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour.

When Zephirus eke with his sote brethe

Enspired hath in every holt and heth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge Sonne

Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,

And smale foules maken melodie,

That slepen alle night with open eye

So priketh hem nature in her corages;

Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages.'

And there is scarcely one of his successors who has not taken up the burden of his song, and chanted of the joys of the time

'When well-apparel'd April on the heel  
Of limping Winter treads.'

Who has not found something to say about the violets? Does not Milton tell us that

'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph that liv'st  
unseen,

selects her place of abode

'By slow Meander's margent green,  
And in the violet-embroider'd vale?

Violets 'strew the green lap of the coming spring,' and are indifferently alluded to by the poet as gems instinct 'with Cytherea's

breath;' and by the huntsman as 'them stinking flowers;' which only shows how differently the same thing may strike different people.

What regulates the movements of the more prosperous portion of society? It is a singular reflection, and yet it is indubitably to a certain extent the fact, that we are driven about from country to town and back again in consequence of various arrangements made by feathered fowl and Reynard the Fox. Birds must be shot when they are ready for shooting, or, rather, when they are in condition to be made the victims of our bows and spears—that is to say, our breech-loaders; and vengeance must be wrought on the wily fox for his sad propensity for jumping over the parson's gate and committing havoc in the sacerdotal poultry-yard, when the crops will not be destroyed by a troop of galloping horsemen, and when hedges are bare of leaf, and practicable. So it befalls that laws are made for our governance, and the London season is carried through, during the heat of summer, when we should be much better in the country; and during the early spring, when those who love nature—if any one really does in these tear-away days—would find so much to charm their eyes and ears and hearts in dear familiar copses and verdant country lanes. May I return to the poets for a moment, and quote what Robert Browning thought about our April as he lingered in Italy—Browning, who does not receive half his due tribute of honour, and who has written lyrics which may take rank amongst

the most exquisite in the language?—

'Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brush-  
wood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny  
leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard  
bough  
In England—now!'

The second verse is too charming to leave unquoted:—

'And after April, when May follows,  
And the white-throat builds, and all  
the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in  
the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the  
clover  
Blossoms and dew-drops—at the bent  
spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each  
song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could  
recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with  
hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes  
anew  
The buttercups, the little children's  
dower—  
Far brighter than the gaudy indoor  
flower!'

Who can explain why some songs come back to us from time to time with as much freshness as the flowers of which they speak? and why is it that what seems most simple is most delicious? Nothing, for instance, could possibly be simpler than the old song, 'When daisies pied and violets blue,' from 'Love's Labour Lost.' It is, if you come to analyse it from a prosaic point of view, a straightforward transcript of the ordinary features of an English landscape, told, moreover, in the plainest language; for, except that the flowers

'Do paint the meadows with delight,'  
there is scarcely any figurative

language in the song; and yet its charm is irresistible.

It is necessary to leave the country to the blackbirds and thrushes, however, and follow the world to London. The 'pink' has been laid up in lavender; guns are reposing harmlessly in the gun-room; the partridges which have not made the acquaintance of bread-sauce can sun themselves securely, and pheasants strut from their copses into the open fields, vacant of their late enemies. The hunter is enjoying his well-earned rest, though he frisks and caracoles, when the groom takes him for a turn, as though he longed to hear again the music of the hounds; and the hack is careering mildly up and down Rotten Row, where the philosophic mind may daily find much food for reflection.

I wonder why it is that a bishop invariably rides a cob? The inferior orders of the clergy take exercise on horses similar to those of their lay brethren. Even his lordship doubtless presented himself before the world mounted on a steed of good proportions when he was a curate and a rector, but so soon as he succeeds to the episcopate he is never to be seen on anything much over 14-2. Here they come in an endless stream. There is his lordship who has given rise to these reflections on the subject of horseflesh in connection with the Establishment, and immediately after him, attended by a couple of well-mounted cavaliers, comes Miss X——, whom you may see any evening at the Theatre Royal, Blank, let us say. I should not imagine that her weekly wage did much to drain the treasury; and if her position on the boards were decided only by her talent it would be even smaller, seeing that

her histrionic ability is much of the same order as that of the genus *psittacus*—she learns like a parrot, or so it seems to me. Yet here she is, riding one of the best horses in the Park, and, I must do her the justice to say, riding it with a grace and courage second to scarcely any lady whom she crosses. Presently you will see her driving a pair of high-stepping ponies in a neatly turned-out phaeton; which only shows—at least I suppose so—what economy can do to make both ends meet, even round a wide circle which includes a stable full of well-tended cattle.

Here it was that Foker, on his pony, dodged about the arch of the Green Park, eagerly looking and longing for a glimpse of the sylphide Blanche Amory, who was sitting in the carriage outside 'Hunter's,' and refreshing herself with a large pink ice; and having finished it, the radiant vision quickly beamed before his eyes, and he obtained the nod of recognition for which his soul had thirsted as they crossed each other in the drive. 'What is the use of looking at a woman in a pink bonnet across a ditch? What is the earthly good to be got out of a nod of the head? Strange that men will be contented with such pleasures, or, if not contented, at least that they will be so eager in seeking them,' the wise moralist says. But so it has been since the beginning, and so it will be to the end of the chapter. A smile from her, the one true woman in the world, makes us happy for a day, a pressure of the hand for a whole week. There is no one like her.

'Nay, but you, who do not love her,  
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?  
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above  
her?  
Aught like this tress, see, and this  
tress?'

So we say, but presently it seems that the gold which looked so pure is alloyed, and so daily hearts are broken—and mended.

Over in the Drive the world is busy. Carriages come clattering over the paved space around the gates, and, turning to the left, run smoothly down the familiar way towards the Serpentine, where little children under the care of short nursery-maids, who are not unfrequently escorted by tall guardsmen, are enjoying themselves. Achilles with sword and buckler stands on his pedestal in a defiant attitude, as though daring any comer to tell him of a more brilliant scene, and to exhibit handsomer girls and more stately matrons than those which are borne past him in such equipages as only England seems able to supply; drawn by horses, too, which are not to be matched elsewhere, and champ their bits, proud of taking their share in the ordinances of the London season. Some of the country coachmen are a little fussy and nervous, and form a contrast to the solemn demeanour and unflinching steadiness of their London brethren; and it is pleasant to see that in many instances the cruel bearing-reins have been taken off. In good hands no well-trained horse needs these barbarities, and if an animal cannot carry its head properly without a sharp bit to make it arch its neck, it is not suitable for a carriage. Dowagers in well-hung barouches driven by coachmen of impassive mien. City ladies in the 'carriage and pair,' who pass up and down without seeing a face that they know, enjoying the drive nevertheless because it makes something to talk about; but what circumstance justifies John Coachman in mounting that cockade? and why is it that the footman bears upon him indelible marks

of the suburbs, and differs so entirely from his Belgravian brother? This question of servants is a very singular one. A gentleman may have had servants about him, but still, somehow, they always look as if they served a gentleman; while the *parvenus* never seems able to find a decent attendant. Neat little traps drawn by pairs of spirited ponies curb in and out of the tall carriages when they get the chance, reminding one of yachts amidst a fleet of big ships; and it is a fact to be noted that in almost every case the ponies are driven by pretty women. A 'swell'—none but a slang word expresses the genus—his white gloves holding the light reins which guide a very high-stepping bay harnessed to an immaculate phaeton, drives past; and then, looking as if he hated being driven about, and wanted the hunting season to come round again, the well-known face of a stalwart Welsh baronet heaves in sight.

But why is that mounted policeman cantering along and motioning with his hand? A victoria is coming rapidly along, and a Lady in it smiles a sweet and gracious acknowledgment as all down the line hats are lifted to her with loving reverence.

'Welcome her thunders of fort and of fleet!  
Welcome her thundering cheer of the street!  
Welcome her all things youthful and sweet,  
Scatter the blossom under her feet!  
Break, happy land, into earlier flowers!  
Make music, O bird, in the new-budded bowers!  
Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours!'

Alas! time flies, and it is too true that twelve full years have passed since the Laureate sang greeting to the

'Sea-king's daughter, as happy as fair,  
Blissful bride of a blissful heir.'

Who that could sing, indeed, did not make her a welcome? Even poor Mr. Tupper constructed a numerical rebus beginning,

'A hundred thousand welcomes,'

and continuing in the same strain in arithmetical progression until he had made what he fondly imagined was a poem, and had, to use an expression of that extraordinary bard, 'steeped in the unimperishable elixir of print' so glorious an event.

'Come to us, love us, and make us your own!'

the Laureate cried, and how nobly our Princess has done her task! Could duties be more graciously and gracefully fulfilled than are those which fall to her lot in the busy world of London? But it is not here that our Princess chiefly shines, and shows herself to be what we desired to see her, an English gentlewoman. The blessings which flow from her bounteous hand, the kind word which raises their value a hundredfold, are not known to the world at large; but there are cottage homes in England where one might hear stories told, in very simple language, which would prove what a heart our sea-king's daughter has. Even the 'World' and the 'Englishman' could find no venomous arrows to launch at such a princess as ours; and happy is that coming race which shall be ruled—may the day be far distant!—by such a noble lady.

No one seems to know what foreign royalty we are to entertain this season, and the excitement which potentates have created in bygone years has raised a sort of feeling that things are brighter with a sovereign in our midst. I think, however, that we may expect the King of Greece. Last year the Prince of the Asturias

was here, unknown and unnoticed save by few. The Prince, little dreaming of what time had in store, or rather, perhaps, not thinking that events would move so rapidly, had accepted an invitation to be the guest of a young gentleman in Scotland; but instead of the quiet life of an Aberdeenshire country house, his Majesty is governing Spain under the style and title of King Alfonso XII., which will probably be a very good thing for Spain and a great nuisance for himself. What shall be said about another prince (who is growing into a personable likeness of an Englishman), the Prince Imperial? It will be well to make the most of him while he is here; for in spite of the French Senate, the Conservative Republic, and a more or less lame healing of feuds and making of friends amongst political parties which fear and distrust one another, the Empire may be nearer than is generally suspected.

All lovers of the stage will rejoice that the vicious entertainments which lately disgraced our boards have been swept away, and that a decided taste for plays of a purer and higher character has so decidedly manifested itself; and I am glad to say that 'London Society' was one of the first publications, if indeed it was not the very first, that protested against 'actresses whose only claim to the title was that they were labelled as such in the photograph-shop windows.' Many months ago a colleague in this magazine remarked, *à propos* of the subject, 'There is a powerful amount of sterling common sense in public opinion, and it is just beginning visibly to assert itself towards the suppression of these theatrical nuisances.' Subsequent events have proved that the signs of the times were justly read.

We have always been led to believe that Shakespeare spelt ruin, but yet, wonderful to relate, he is being played at no fewer than four theatres at the time of writing, and a fifth house promises to add to the list. 'Hamlet' continues to flourish according to its deserts, and a short time ago we celebrated the hundredth night at a banquet in the theatre, when everybody was congratulated and drank the health and prosperity of everybody else, to which compliments everybody else made suitable acknowledgments. Strangest of all, however, is the fact that Mr. John Hollingshead has three theatres which are all giving Shakesperian comedy: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' at the Gaiety; 'As You Like It,' at the Opéra Comique; and 'The Merchant of Venice,' at the Holborn Amphitheatre.

Only a little while since the poet and his works were held in such estimation that I am told a rule was made at the Gaiety Theatre that any one who quoted Shakespeare should be fined a sum sufficient to supply liquid refreshment to the green-room; and the ingenious 'mummers' who constitute the company were wont to lay traps for their brethren by making remarks directly suggesting familiar lines, the chances being that some one present would thoughtlessly make the quotation; but all this is changed. I only wish I could say that the execution of the artists was as good as the intentions of the manager; but it is no use denying the fact that none of these plays has been efficiently presented, and, consequently, if they should not prove pecuniary successes, it will not be fair to say that 'Shakespeare does not draw.'

It is often asserted that 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is unsuitable for theatrical performance,

but with this dictum I cannot agree; because it is probable that Shakespeare was the best judge of a play, and would not have written the idyl in dramatic form had he not intended it for the stage. Certainly, however, it requires exceptionally good acting. For a well-grown young lady to bid various members of the ballet to go—

'Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;  
Some, war with rear-mice for their leathern wings  
To make my small elves coats,'

would sound ludicrous unless we were thoroughly imbued with the poetry and spirit of the scene. Puck tells us how we are to accept the play:—

'If we shadows have offended  
Think but this (and all is mended),  
That you have but slumbered here  
While these visions did appear,  
And this weak and idle theme,  
No more yielding than a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend.'

The work, indeed, requires the most exquisitely delicate treatment, and we shall probably never see it really interpreted; but it does not follow, therefore, that interpretation is impossible. A good effect was made at Sadler's Wells some years ago by placing a curtain of light green gauze between audience and actors in the fairy scenes, but this plan has not been adopted at the Gaiety.

With regard to 'As You Like It,' a notable feature is the Jacques of Mr. Hermann Vezin, who is one of the very few actors on the stage who can soliloquise. If some performers—who are evidently unaware of the fact—would look at the dictionary, they would find that a soliloquy is 'a discourse made by one in solitude to himself;' and they would find nothing to justify the supposition that it is a set speech to be re-

peated by rote. The words should flow gradually from the speaker as though they occurred to his mind only as he spoke them, and the slightest appearance of making a premeditated oration entirely spoils the effect. Mr. Irving understands this, and well indicates it, as, for example, in Hamlet's first soliloquy:

'My father's brother; but no more like  
my father  
Than I —'

and he pauses for a simile: one occurs to him:

'— to Hercules,'

he continues. You can see that the comparison strikes him as he is speaking.

So it is with Jacques' 'All the world's a stage.' The Duke—who had perhaps been reading Petronius, '*Non duco contentionis funem, dum constet inter nos, quod fere totus mundus exerceat histrioniam*'—gives him the cue:

'Thou seest, we are not all alone unhappy;  
This wide and universal theatre  
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene  
Wherein we play;'

and then, meditating on the idea, Jacques, sitting with his back to the others, and eyes fixed upon the ground, begins:

'All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely  
players:'

he works out his theme as he goes on, and, in fact, soliloquises. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal are intelligent and bright as Orlando and Rosalind, and Mr. Maclean proves himself to be the possessor of a fund of pathos as Adam. But when minor characters are badly played they do a great deal to spoil the efforts of the principals, especially when the principals are not nearly immaculate.



Of 'The Merchant of Venice' it is enough to say that Mr. Creswick is the best of an inefficient company. But fancy the intense excitement which the Trial scene must have evoked when the play was first acted! The bond is forfeited, Antonio's friends petition in vain for mercy, and the Jew whets that cruel, gleaming knife upon his shoe and glares at his victim, who is sadly, but withal courageously, baring his bosom 'nearest the heart.' Portia, or rather the learned doctor Balthazar, enters: it appears for a moment that there is hope, but hope soon dies. Antonio confesses the bond, and 'Then must the Jew be merciful,' is all that Balthazar seems able to say. 'On what compulsion must I? tell me that!' cries Shylock; but nobody can, and he grimly sharpens his knife while he is being told that

'The quality of mercy is not strain'd;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain of heaven  
Upon the place beneath.'

No: it is clearly all up with Antonio.

'To do a great right, do a little wrong,  
And curb this cruel devil of his will,'

pleads Bassanio, but vainly. The Duke may not interfere, and Balthazar solemnly proclaims that

'It must not be. There is no power in  
Venice  
Can alter a decree established.'

Shylock is triumphant.

'A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a  
Daniel!  
O wise young judge, how I do honour  
thee!'

Shylock can think of no term of praise too warm. Balthazar is noble, excellent, rightful, righteous, learned, and the rest. The Jew will not have a surgeon to stop Antonio's wounds lest he should bleed to death, it is not nominated in the bond, and he is

in a hurry to begin his vengeance. Balthazar sternly delivers judgment:

'A pound of that same merchant's flesh  
is thine:  
The court awards it, and the law doth  
give it.'

'And you must cut this flesh from off  
his breast:  
The law allows it, and the court  
awards it.'

So Shylock cries 'Prepare!' and advances.

Imagine the sensations of an audience which did not know what was about to happen. They had trusted entirely to Portia, who had planned an artful scheme; but certainly it appears that the scheme has failed. There is no way out of it. The Jew has the law on his side, and, much as every one regrets it, the decrees of Venice are like the law of the ancient Medes and Persians, which altereth not. One moment more, and Antonio will be lifeless, with Shylock's knife buried deep in his heart. But

'Tarry a moment: there is something  
else,'

Balthazar says, stepping before the eager Jew, and then he proceeds to explain some points of law on which Shylock has been ill-informed.

'The bond doth give thee here no jot of  
blood;  
The words expressly are, a pound of  
flesh:  
Take then thy bond, take thou thy  
pound of flesh;  
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost  
shed  
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands  
and goods  
Are, by the laws of Venice, confis-  
cate.'

It is quite certain that the very first drop of Antonio's blood he sheds will bring the most unpleasant consequences upon himself. 'Is that the law?' he asks, pausing, and not yet able to realise

the truth. And Balthazar tells him more about it still. If he takes more or less than a pound, even so that the scale, with which he has thoughtfully provided himself, turn but in the estimation of a hair, he must die. Nor is that all. For conspiring against a Venetian citizen his life is forfeit and his goods confiscated. Tables were never more completely turned. Shylock totters out in an agony of disappointed rage and hate.

Soon after this paper is published, the play will be given at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and I hope it may be successful. As to the chances of its artistic success, I have a strong opinion; but no wise man should neglect the advice of the American sage, who wrote 'Never you prophecy until you know.' Some people would have us believe that Mr. Coghlan, who is to play the Jew, is the coming actor; but experience has taught me never to believe in coming actors until they have come; and it seems to me that Mr. Coghlan's utter absence of any power to express pathos or tenderness must militate against his success in most characters, though in Shylock it will not much signify.

As I am writing, I receive the prospectus of the Royal Italian Opera for the coming season, and a very welcome little pamphlet it certainly is. If there is little to satisfy the craving for novelty which seizes many people (who often don't care an atom about the novelties when they get them), it must be remembered that, as a rule, all that was attempted last season was ably done; and we can well put up with a repetition of a good deal of it. Of some of the operas announced we certainly have a right to be thoroughly

weary. I must confess, for instance, that I dread to see the curtain raised disclosing the 'sallotto in casa di Violetta.' 'Libiamo, libiamo ne' lieti calici,' by all means, but let us try a little fresher vintage. 'Di Provenza il mar, il suol, chi dal cor ti cancellò?' why indeed? But if you would return and stay there for a few years, M. Germont, how much more heartily we should welcome your return! Then, again, there is all that sad business which takes place round about the Palazzo dell'Aliaferia, the residence of the Conte di Luna. 'Vedi!' cries the Count, as, dragging Azucena to the window of the dungeon, he points to Manrico (who, being a tenor, has naturally been unfortunate: operatic tenors almost invariably are, on the stage) on his way to execution. The fatal axe is raised and falls. 'E spento!' triumphantly exclaims the Count. 'E spento!' cries the gipsy. 'Egli era tuo fratello!'—the infant that all the fuss has been made about. 'Ei! quale orror! E vivo ancor,' says his lordship, and there is too much reason to fear that he will remind us of the circumstance again in a few days, and constantly afterwards.

These and some other well-worn subjects might be put upon the shelf for a few years with felicitous results to *habitués*; but who would miss some of the other old friends with whom every one is heartily familiar? What street is this to which we are taken as dawn is breaking? and who are these, the man with the lantern in his hand, the cavalier wrapped in a long cloak, and the rest? 'Piano, pianissimo, senza parlar,' they sing—of course, Fiorello and his companions, and the cavalier is none other than the Count Almaviva, though at present he chooses to call himself Lindoro. This is the

house of old Doctor Bartolo, and in it dwells his ward, the most charming little lady in the world, Mlle. Rosina Adelina Patti. 'Ecco ridente il cielo,' chants his lordship, and the serenade is not wasted on the empty air. 'Una voce poco' makes its way to her chamber.

'Sì, Lindoro, mio sarà!  
Le giurai—la vincerò,'

she presently tells us; and, owing in a great measure to the reprehensible and scandalous behaviour of a music-master and a barber, Don Basilio and Figaro by name, the Count's boldness and address are triumphant, and Mlle. Rosina Adelina becomes a countess.

Caterina, who lives in the village on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, is another figure we could not see too often. Her lover is one Peter, but, though he is working diligently as a ship-carpenter, and attached with all his heart to the little village—or at least, that part of it which contains pretty Caterina—there is evidently from the first a mystery about him, and a dignity in his bearing, hide it as he may try to do, which often makes him appear ill suited to his lowly fortunes.

A short time elapses. The Russian army is in the field, and a recruit, put to guard the tent of the Czar of Russia, looks through the canvas—with a curiosity which rude people would call womanish—and sees the Czar and an *aide-de-camp* flirting with two young ladies who have just been singing a ditty about two old generals who loved the same girl, and whilst they were disputing with swords and dice as to whose she should be, had the mortification of seeing her pass by to church on the arm of a gallant young captain. An officer reproves the recruit for peeping, and receives a blow for his pains; so the young soldier

is taken before the Czar and condemned to be shot; and lo and behold, the smart little grenadier is no other than Caterina, who enlisted in place of her brother so that he might be married, and who is angry because she sees her old lover Peter excited with the three delights—wine, woman and song—which are dear to every one who does not purpose to be a 'fool his whole life long,' as a very great authority once said; and Peter erstwhile the shipwright, is the great Czar of Russia!

The forty-seven works which constitute the *répertoire* of the Royal Italian Opera make an entrancing subject for the pen of a writer to whom almost each name presents a host of pleasant memories, of operas well sung in many theatres of all sorts and sizes, and in company with many pleasant people; for indeed no small portion of the enjoyment of the season springs from meetings which take place in that bright rendezvous. But inexorable space only permits a brief review of leading features. Madame Adelina Patti then, Queen of Song *par excellence*, returns to gladden us with her thousand charms, and Mlle. Albani to show to what extent her American experiences have helped towards enabling her to realise the great promise she has given. Mlle. Marimon, whose *fiorituri* is well-nigh unsurpassable for brilliance and accuracy. Madame Vilda, who has some tragic power as well as a noble voice, which assiduous cultivation may have improved since last year: indeed many German critics swear by her. Mlle. D'Angeri, who has shown such excellent capacity that no one can say what the future may have in store for her: let those who would like to guess watch how she plays Selika in 'L'Africaine.' Madame Sinico, who seems to know all the

soprano music that was ever written, and sings and acts cleverly and agreeably in whatever part she undertakes. Mlle. Bianchi, a *débutante* of last year, who will surely rise to the front rank if she is careful of an unformed voice; and Mlle. Smeroschi, who is also very pleasant and satisfactory even in parts which make heavy demands upon her. Mlle. Scalchi and other efficient vocalists are also here. Signor Marini, the tenor who made a very great success last year—I thought one night the house would never have done applauding ‘*Di quella pira*’—returns, together with Signor Nicolini and other good tenors. M. Faure, the most finished artist on the lyric stage both as regards vocal and histrionic ability, will also come; and Graziani, Bagagiolo, Tagliafico and other familiar names are printed in big letters. Mlle. Zaré Thalberg, a daughter of the pianist, is to make her *débüt*. As to the new operas, Rossini’s ‘*Semiramide*,’ Gounod’s ‘*Romeo e Giulietta*,’ Hérold’s ‘*Le Pré aux Clercs*,’ and Wagner’s ‘*Lohengrin*,’ out of which list three are to be given, it can only be said that they will be welcome. Mlle. Albani has made a great artistic if not pecuniary success in New York as Elsa, the heroine of the last named; and persons who have been accustomed to deride the ‘*Music of the Future*’ without any acquaintance with it, will be astonished at the melody and grace of much in ‘*Lohengrin*.’

Herr Wagner could once write music, and why of late years he should have taken to the construction of uncouth and distressing noises is only known to himself. Of the Royal Italian Opera I hope to have more to say on a future occasion.

Mr. Mapleson’s prospectus is not out at the time this paper must be sent to press, but I hear that he also will give ‘*Lohengrin*’ with Madame Nilsson as Elsa. If it should please the *prima donna* to act and sing like an artist, she has the power; but whether or not it will, the experience of last year shows to be problematical. There is a chance for her to regain some of the supremacy which, I think, she has been losing for some time past, and as such powers as she showed some seasons ago are rarely found, it is to be hoped that she may consider it worth while to do her best. Another novelty at Her Majesty’s is to be Cherubini’s ‘*Medea*,’ with Fraulein Titiens in the *title rôle*. This is certain to be well done, and cannot fail to gratify cultured hearers.

I hear rumours of French companies being formed for our edification, and after the experiences of last year, when several third-rate performances failed, it is improbable that inferior troupes will venture to the London boards. But the season is young yet: as schemes mature, I hope to discuss them in these columns.

RAPIER.







Drawn by M. E. Edwards.]

AMID THE ROSES.